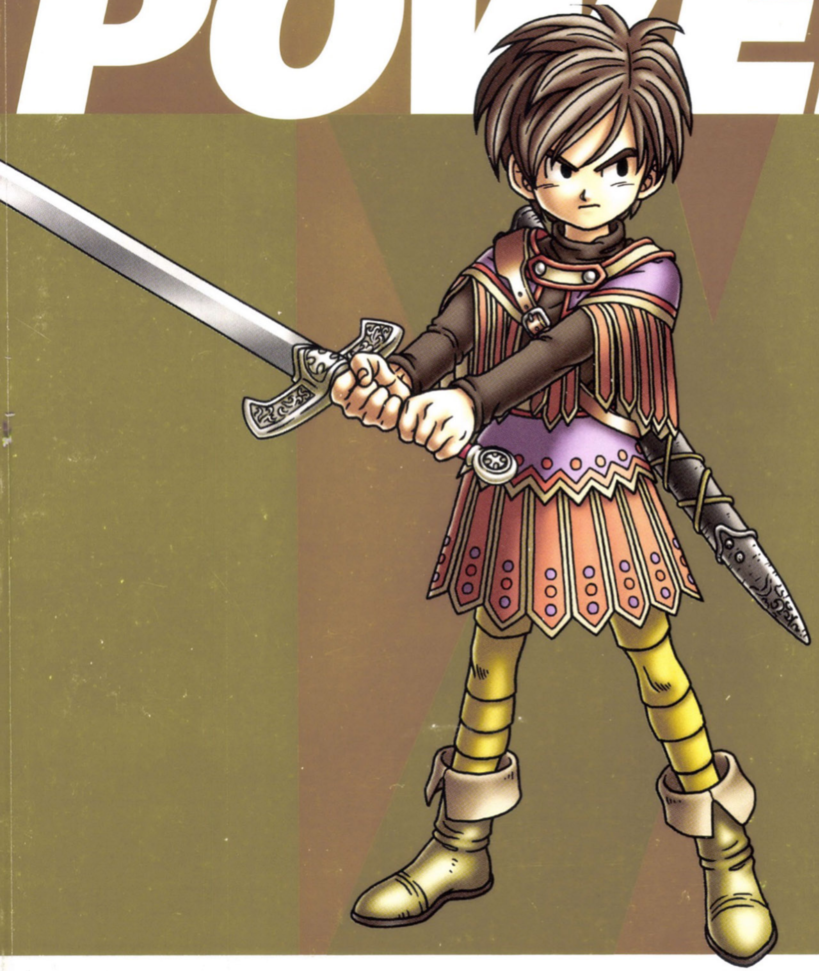
NINTENDO POWER



Dragon Quest IX: Sentinels of the Starry Skies • Epic Mickey • Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes of Light • Okamiden • Super Scribblenauts • Driver San Francisco

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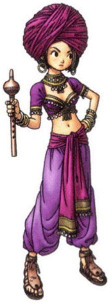
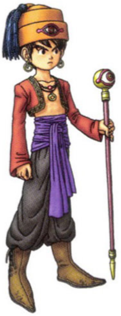
Dragon Quest IX: Sentinels of the Starry Skies

CHARACTER VOCATIONS



Mage: Female



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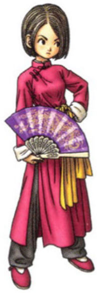
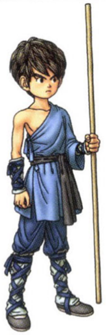
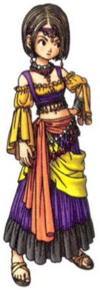


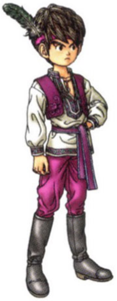
Martial Artist: Female



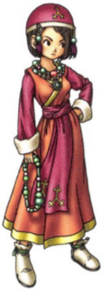
Martial Artist: Male



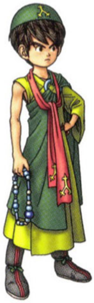
Minstrel: Female



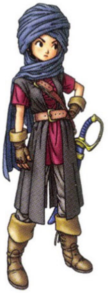
Minstrel: Male



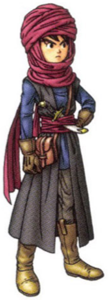
Priest: Female



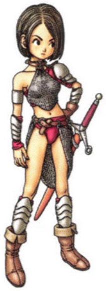
Priest: Male



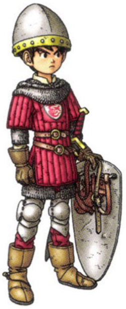
Thief: Female



Thief: Male



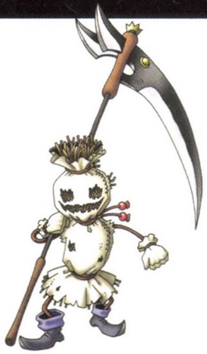
Warrior: Female

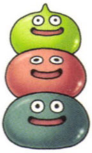


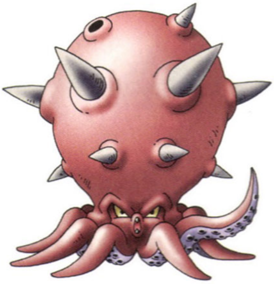
Warrior: Male

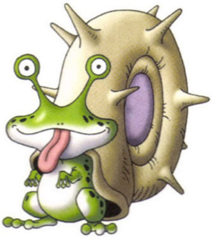
Dragon Quest IX: Sentinels of the Starry Skies

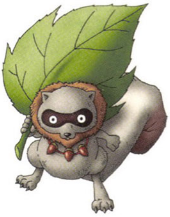
MONSTER GALLERY

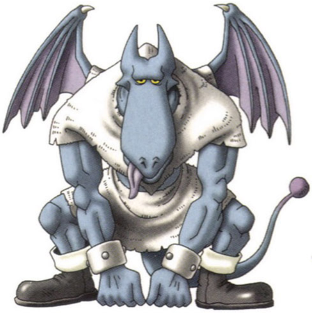

Ragged Reaper

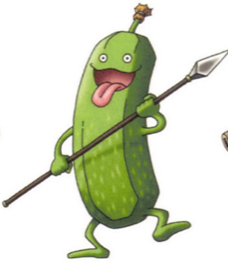

Slime Stack


Knocktopus


Gastropog


Boppin' Badger


Great Gruffon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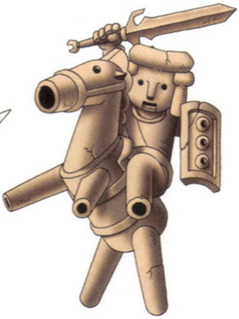
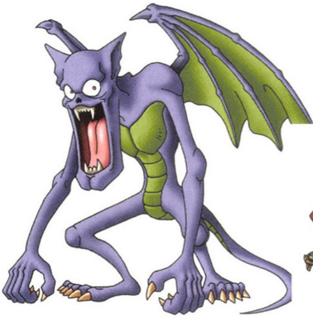
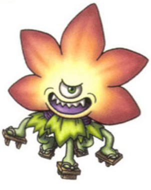
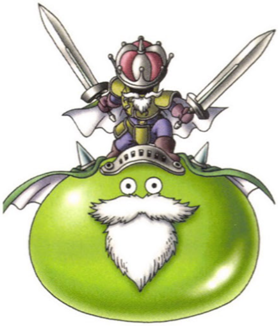

Earthenwarrior


Manguini


Leafy Larrikin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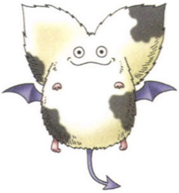
Teeny Sanguini

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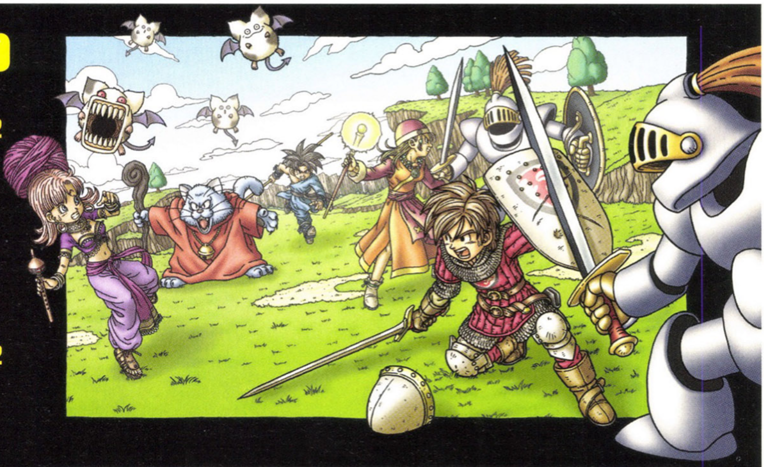

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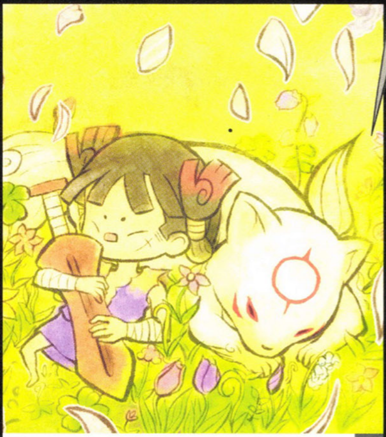

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Wii
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Wii
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NINTENDO POWER

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DW = DSiWARE
GB = GAME BOY
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWARE

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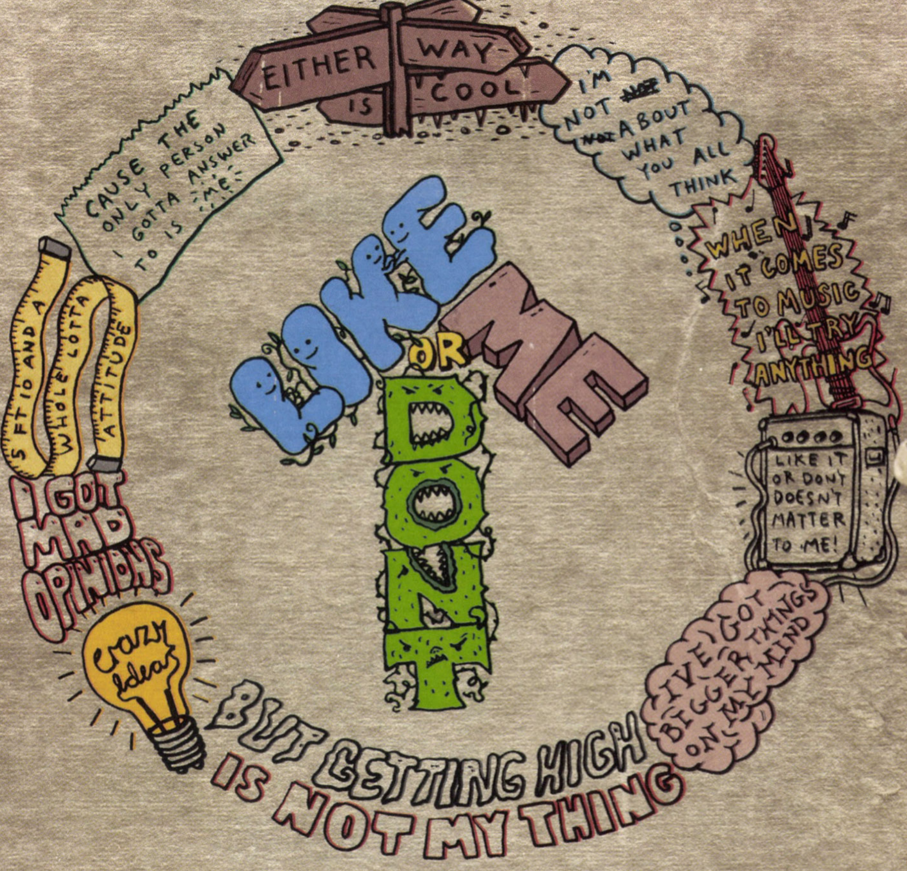
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Pulse

Second Chances

Chris Slate

There used to be all sorts of rules about the kinds of games we would accept here in the West, and as a result we were never given the chance to try some truly amazing titles from overseas. But, as Nintendo has shown again and again in recent years, rules are meant to be broken. After a grueling seven-year wait for the N64 classic Sin and Punishment to come stateside, its Wii sequel took just over seven months to get here. And although Japan's beloved Dragon Quest series has yet to duplicate its homeland success in the West, the folks at Nintendo are confident enough in the latest installment to bring it over themselves. Credit Wii and Nintendo DS for the change. Because those systems have broadened the definition of what games can be, people are more willing to try something new. From big-budget blockbusters to indie experiments, games and gamers' appetites have never been as diverse as they are today. Now more than ever, every great game has a chance to shine.

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

Wii
SUPER REVIEW!
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8-BIT GRAND THEFT AUTO?
BIG REVEALS:
SONIC REBORN
FIRST LOOK at SONIC COLORS, Sonic's solo space adventure for Wii and DS!
Future

V257 **JULY 2010**

Chris Slate here, back once again to answer your letters while fruitlessly hacking away at a Healslime. But first, this month's special letter request: what did you think of Nintendo's E3 announcements? Send your responses to the address on page 8, and we'll print the best ones!

LETTERS

A quick reminder before we begin: as I warned in last month's Pulse, any letter that comes in unsigned will be credited to one of the all-time worst video game characters. Keep your letters coming, but please remember to sign them and avoid the shame!

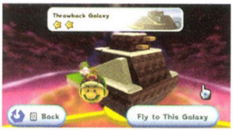
The Prince's Vicious Circle

You know how LEGO made a Prince of Persia toy set based off the movie? And how LEGO likes to make video games of its sets? Well, wouldn't it be weird if they made a LEGO Prince of Persia video game? It would be a game based off a LEGO set based off a movie based off a game. So, essentially, it would be a video game based off a video game. Weird! —**CHANCE F.**

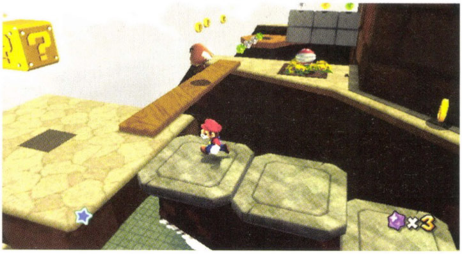
Magic Moment

The best gaming moment for 2010 has to be the reveal of the Throwback Galaxy in Super Mario Galaxy 2. I wasn't quite sure what it was when it first showed up on the map, but I flipped out as soon as I entered the level. The folks at Nintendo are pretty clever to think of bringing back Whomp's Fortress from Super Mario 64—that gave them one less galaxy to think up. The stage, the music, and the boss battle couldn't have been more perfect! —**BOOGERMAN**

I am not ashamed to admit that I squealed when Mario zoomed down to that galaxy. (Well, maybe a *little* ashamed, but too late now—it's in print.) I absolutely love it when little retro treats like that are put into games!



Can any surprise this year top Mario's trip back to the N64 era?



Well, it looks like Sonic's got me again. Even though the Blue Blur has disappointed me time after time, I can't help getting excited about his next game, Sonic Colors, after reading your awesome article. But if the hedgehog lets me down one more time...I'll probably still come crawling back. Release your hold on me, you spiky-haired speed demon! —**CHAOS EMERIL**

Playing with Power-Ups
POCKET COLORS

What the...?

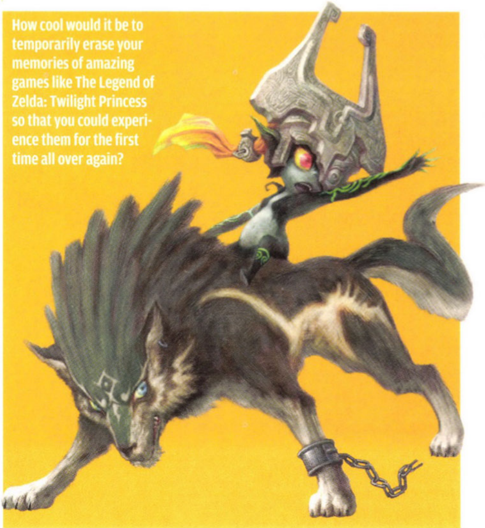
When I was playing Super Smash Bros. Brawl, I selected the "erase all data" option by accident and was transported inside the game! It was so cool! I got to fight Mario, Link, Samus, and Mr. Game & Watch! Unfortunately, Mr. Game & Watch used his octopus Final Smash on me, and I was kicked out of the game. Still, It was an amazing experience. —**JACKSTER W.**

Geez, Jackster—how many Wario Wafts did you take in the face while playing Brawl?

Unexpected Treasure

I was walking to a friend's place and I came across a garage sale. I was looking at a few old Nintendo games that I already had when I found four stacks of Nintendo Power issues that included Volumes 101-151 and some special editions. That was too good of a deal to pass up! —**DAYVERO**

Hey, that wasn't a garage sale—I just left my garage door open! I want those back!


How cool would it be to temporarily erase your memories of amazing games like The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess so that you could experience them for the first time all over again?

Play It Again

Hey guys, if you suddenly lost every single save file that you ever made and had to start your gaming experiences all over again, where would you begin? Would you start with Super Mario Galaxy 2, or go way back to The Legend of Zelda? Me, I would start with my first-ever game: Pokémon Silver. —**MACKENZIE A.**

Wow, great question. I think it would depend on what kind of mood I was in. But here's a similar question for you and everyone else: what if you could temporarily erase your memories of a single game or series so that you could re-experience it as if you'd never played it? I'd wipe out all my knowledge of the Legend of Zelda series and pop in Twilight Princess. I always envy new Zelda players who have yet to discover how those games work.

Another for Other

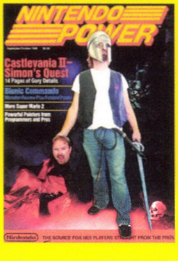
I just wanted to say that, even though I'm not a big Metroid fan, Volume 255 definitely convinced me to buy Metroid: Other M. Your timeline of Metroid games was a pretty quick and interesting way of summing up the Metroid story. —**KID CHAMELEON**

Glad to be of service! Now we'll do you another favor: go to the Wii Shop Channel, download Super Metroid for Virtual Console, dive in, and don't forget that you owe us big-time.

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

Hoffman, why are *you* so special? You get your own column, for Pete's sake! Why don't we give *everybody* their own column? That way you won't get to bask in your own special light. Let's replace "Don't Hassle the Hoff" with "Don't Sass C. Slate!" —**DIZZY**

The Hoff says: First, Chris Slate answers most of the letters in Pulse, plus he has to deal with me. He gets enough sass as it is! Second, how dare you mention my nemesis, Pete?! I still haven't forgiven him for the time he "accidentally" injured me when he mistook me for a vampire: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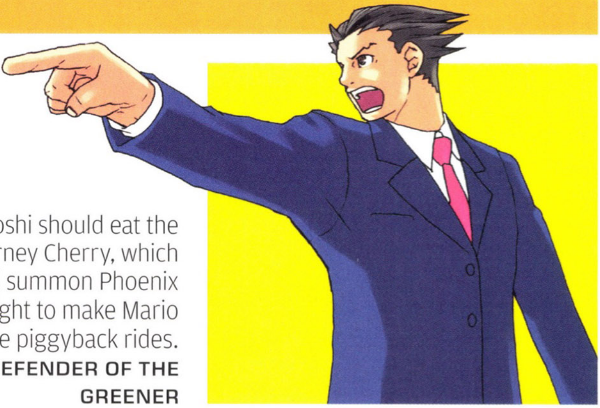

Yoshi should eat the Attorney Cherry, which would summon Phoenix Wright to make Mario give free piggyback rides. **—DEFENDER OF THE GREENER**

What's a cool new idea for a Yoshi Fruit?

There should be a fruit called the Ugly Fruit, which would look like a mushy banana. When Yoshi eats it, his enemies would turn so ugly that they would hide in embarrassment! **—NICHOLAS**

I would love to see a Reversal Fruit that makes Mario get on the ground so Yoshi can ride *him*! **—PETER M.**

My special fruit is one that allows Yoshi to act like a chameleon. He and Mario would blend into the background perfectly, so this fruit would be useful for sneaking past guards and enemies without being seen. **—JAMIE**

I think it'd be interesting if Yoshi were to eat a fruit that replaced his legs with four wheels. He could engage in high-speed battles and races all around the planet. **—AWESOME POSSUM**

I would create the Travolta Fruit. It would look like a disco ball with a stem, and would make Yoshi dance so well that enemies would be stunned. **—ZELDAFAN286**

My special fruit would be called the Time-Stopper Melon, which would make a black spotlight come out of Yoshi's eyes that would freeze anything in time and turn it black and white. This would add a whole lot of puzzle and action to the gameplay! **—BAYOU BILLY**

I think that a good power-up for Yoshi would be to turn into a tornado and suck in all of the enemies that are close by. **—KIRBY MEETS DONKEY KONG**

Yoshi should eat some fruit that makes him spit out the FLUDD backpack from Super Mario Sunshine, so Mario can put it on and do all the things he could do in that game. **—JAMES POND**

The Chill Cherry: it would enable Yoshi to freeze enemies and make paths of ice on water. **—NPO**

I'd like to see a Mask Berry that turns Yoshi into a Phanto. C'mon, who wouldn't want to ride a *Phanto*? (Hopefully I don't have to tell you this, but Phanto's the mask from Super Mario Bros. 2.) **—ALT**

There should be a Prince of Persia fruit! It would be useful to run on walls and rewind time in a Mario game. The only downside to this power is that the Dahaka would start chasing you. **—BRYCE**

Yoshi should have a Garlic Fruit power-up (garlic is a fruit, right?) that would let him expel stinky eggs to use as bombs against barriers and enemies. Maybe Yoshi and Wario could team up together in a new game as garlic buddies (shudder). **—MONEYHEAD6**

How about a Dragon Fruit power-up? It would make Yoshi sprout wings to fly, and you could aim fireballs by pointing the remote. It would be just like when Yoshi gets the Smash Ball in Super Smash Bros. Brawl. It would be the most lethal Yoshi Mario's ever ridden! **—ZACH BONEBRAKE**

The Mind Banana would allow Yoshi to control his enemies. For example, if you needed to stand on two switches at the same time, Yoshi could gulp down a Mind Banana and make a Goomba stand on the other switch. **—JACK S.**

The Polarity Pomegranate would let Yoshi attract metal things like Chomps for puzzle purposes, and could switch polarity to repel projectiles such as Bullet Bills. **—THE (ANGRY) MOB OF MOBLINS**

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Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

NINTENDO POWER

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What Nintendo fans think, want, and do

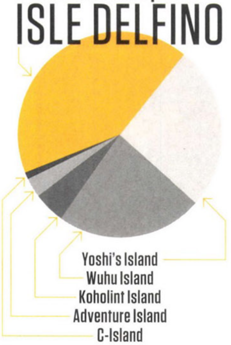
The SCORE

WEIGH IN ON NEXT MONTH'S TOPICS AT WWW.NINTENDOPOWER.COM/POLLS.

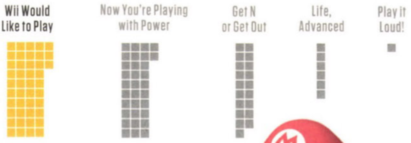
RYU: 76%
OR
KEN: 24%

63 PERCENT of you make a flashy jump when grabbing a Power Star in the Super Mario Galaxy games.

What's the best vacation spot?
ISLE DELFINO



WHICH NINTENDO SLOGAN IS YOUR FAVORITE?



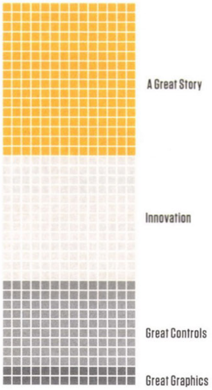
YOSHI
WOULD BE THE MOST FUN TO REALLY RIDE

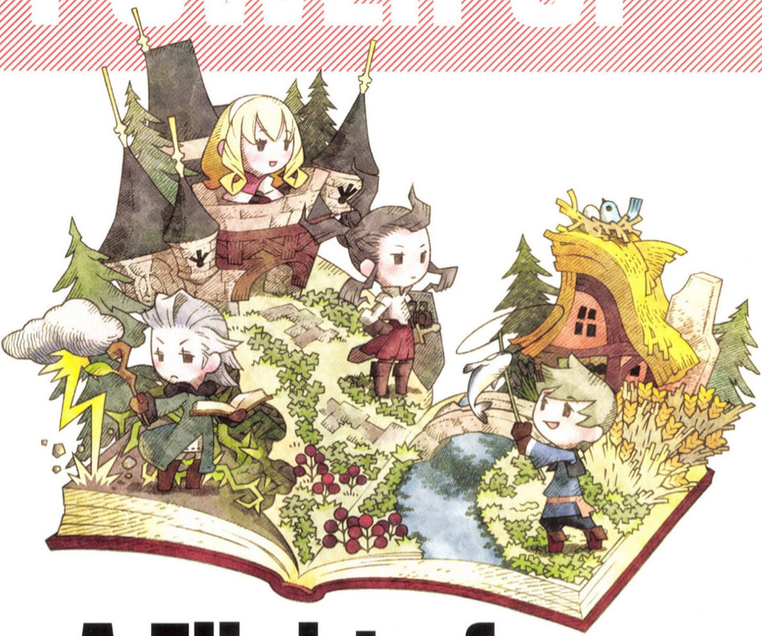
Yoshi 41% • Samus's ship 18% • An Arwing 17% • Epona 14% • The Blue Falcon 10%

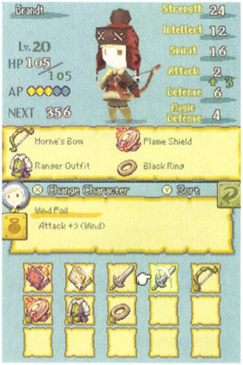
ROCK MARIO 26%
CLOUD MARIO 74%

7 OUT OF 10 OF YOU PLAY NINTENDO DS MORE AT HOME THAN AWAY

What matters most in a game?






Brandt
Lv. 20
HP 105/105
AP
NEXT 356
Strength 24
Intellect 12
Spirit 16
Attack 2 3
Defense 6
Magic Defense 4
Horne's Bow
Flame Shield
Ranger Outfit
Black Ring
Ⓧ Change Character
Ⓨ Sort
Wind Foil
Attack +3 (Wind)

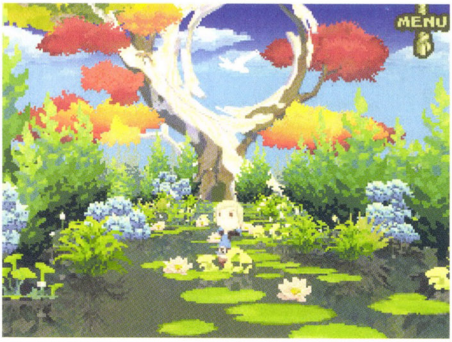
A Flight of Fantasy

Retro gameplay and modern production values collide in the newest Nintendo DS epic from Square Enix—Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes of Light.

"**THERE'S NO ROOM LEFT** for imagination in most modern RPGs," laments Takashi Tokita, the director of Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes of Light. He began his 25-year career at Square Enix working on Final Fantasy III, a game that had only the thinnest shell of a story. But nowadays, the Final Fantasy series faces frequent criticism for overly convoluted plotlines and an excessive focus on event scenes. "In the 8-bit era, the memory limitations of the cartridge format and the means of expression were very limited for developers," explains Tokita. "But that left more room for players to deduce and imagine."

This topic came up often at the offices of Square Enix and Matrix Software as Tokita's team debated what aspects of Final Fantasy III and IV to modernize for their recent remakes on the Nintendo DS system. The experience made them wistful for the days of simple concepts and straightforward storylines that sparked players' imaginations. And so for their next project, the team decided to mix old-school RPG design with the cutting-edge visuals of today.

Ironically, Tokita himself was a pioneer in adding deep narratives to RPGs; he directed Final Fantasy IV, the first game in the series to focus primarily on storytelling. "Things have come full circle since then," he concedes, referring to both himself and industry. While a spirit of youthful rebellion led him to create the most story-dense RPG of his time, that same spirit is now pushing him the other way. People now expect story-driven experiences, so what if they were given something else? "It's important to provide a tried and

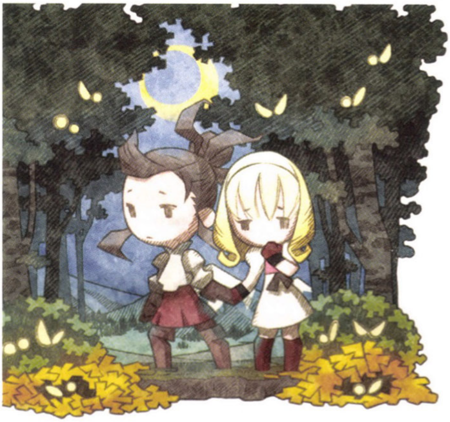


tested gaming experience, but it's equally important to betray these expectations in a way that feels good to players."

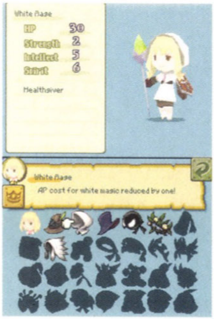
FINAL FANTASY III.5

Final Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes of Light feels eerily like the Final Fantasy IV that Tokita would have made had he not tried to shake up the series. The game features enough of a story to move its cast to the four corners of its colorful world, but is focused primarily on game mechanics, with a new version of Final Fantasy III's job system taking center stage. The game embraces the clichés of the era, beginning with the classic opening of a young hero being awakened by his mom. From that point on, there's never a break in the action—major plot points come and go with only a few lines of dialogue, and control is never jerked away from the player for non-interactive event scenes.

Day-and-night cycles were a mind-blowing innovation in the 8-bit era, and they're still fun. Look out for new merchants and townsfolk when night falls.



At first this can be a little disorienting. How are you to know where to go and what to do next if your characters don't tell you? Like the classics of the NES era, The 4 Heroes of Light never leads players by the nose. If you want to know what to do, you have to figure it out for yourself—talk to everyone in town and see what they have to say. The game won't draw attention to the important bits of dialogue, but players will learn to start thinking like a hero; rumors of a captive being held in a pirate cove just might be worth looking into. It wasn't until I started playing The 4 Heroes of Light that I realized how phenomenally rare of an experience it has become to think for oneself, without benefit of quest logs, flashing arrows, and spell-it-out event scenes. It's a surprisingly satisfying experience.



White Mage

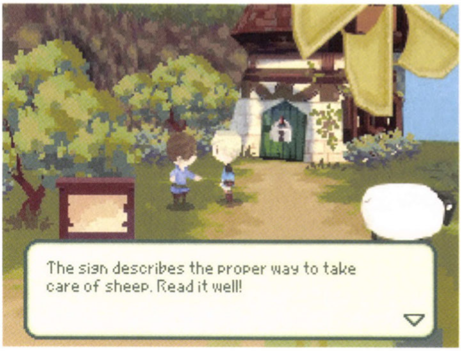
HP	30
Strength	2
Intellect	5
Spirit	6

Healthgiver

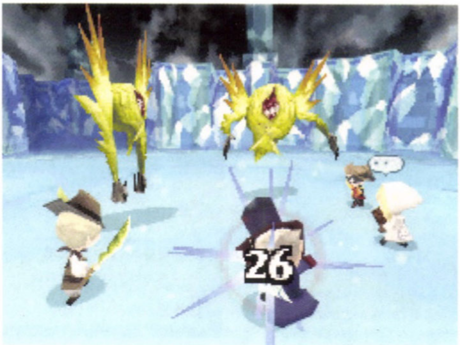
White Mage

AP cost for white magic reduced by one!

That's a definite win for "the way things used to be," but The 4 Heroes of Light doesn't shy away from bringing back other, less popular features of retro games. For example, each of your characters can hold only 15 items, including their equipment and

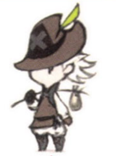


The sign describes the proper way to take care of sheep. Read it well!

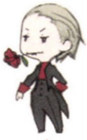


IF THE CROWN FITS...

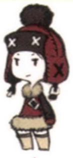
The members of your party will wear many hats over the course of their adventure, each one bringing with it a new set of abilities. You'd be surprised just how useful Seamstresses, Storytellers, and Party Hosts can be!



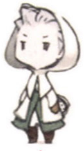
Wayfarer



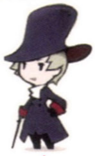
Dancer



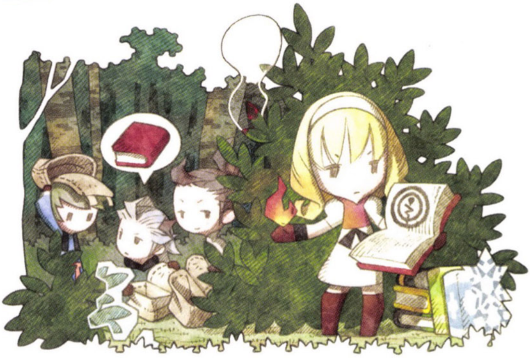
Ranger



White Mage



Black Mage



In the olden days, you didn't just spontaneously learn spells; you had to buy a spellbook. Each one takes an inventory slot, so consider your options carefully!

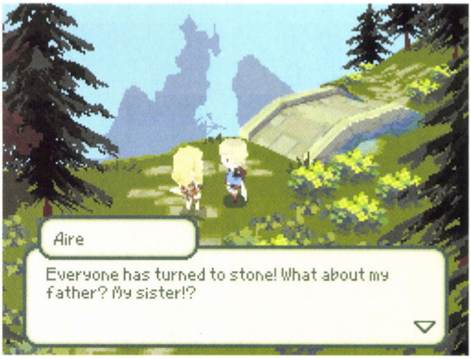
spellbooks. Players will have to think long and hard about whether they can afford the space to carry such luxuries as potions, torches, and spare weaponry. Guest characters may leave your party at any time, taking their gear with them—a frustration I haven't felt in years. On the other hand, you can totally steal their gear for yourself, a thrill that most games no longer allow. Players will need to squelch their desire to horde everything they find, and accept the fact that they may need to do some backtracking to hit the shops and manage their inventory. You can also expect to sweat over some unexpectedly tough boss fights, get thoroughly lost in dungeons (there were no automaps in the retro era), and occasionally get flat-out stuck. Lots of games claim to be retro, but this one isn't pulling any punches.

THE HAT MAKES THE MAN

In the olden days, RPGs were heavily driven by game mechanics, and The 4 Heroes of Light does a fine job of capturing that mood with its fun and deep Crown system. The Crown works similarly to the jobs of Final Fantasy III: you acquire Crowns (really just hats) on your quest, and when you wear them, you lose your current abilities and gain a set of new ones. You can upgrade each character's Crowns by using gems that enemies drop in combat, and you're free to switch Crowns between battles without penalty. Of course, you'll find the usual Black Mages, White Mages, Fighters, and Thieves, but it's the weirder jobs that are the most powerful and fun: Pharmacists can split potions among the party and transform them into deadly poison for foes, Martial Artists can guarantee themselves critical hits and double their own Max HP, and Necromancers can transform the ghosts of dead allies into a potent offensive force.

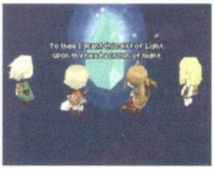
After the fantastic visual style that Matrix created for Final Fantasy IV, it's no surprise that The 4 Heroes of Light would turn out to be such a beautiful game. What *is* a surprise is that the developers abandoned the well-received style of their FF remakes to a radically different look. The bright, solid colors and smoothly scrolling environments in The 4 Heroes of Light are reminiscent of The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker, and the game happily breaks its own nostalgia theme with its rich variety of memorable locations. Unlike the tile-based games of yore, every town looks completely different, and each leaps off the screen like a page from a pop-up book. The music is built around simple, catchy melodies, but the composers have, thankfully, declined to restrict themselves to the flat, scratchy sounds of the 8-bit era.

The retro elements of The 4 Heroes of Light take me—a longtime RPG fan—straight back to the happy days of early NES and Sega Master System RPGs. But what of the new generation of RPG fans who have grown up on brooding heroes, automaps, and quest logs? In some ways, that's the demographic that Tokita is most excited about. As he puts it, "hopefully these nostalgic elements will actually feel like something fresh and new to the younger generation." After 20 years of RPG evolution, everything old has become new again. —**CASEY L.**



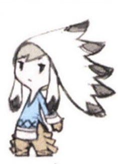
Aire

Everyone has turned to stone! What about my father? My sister!?

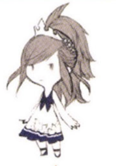


To thee I grant this gift of Light.
upon thy head a crown of might.

[Above] With no LIDS store in the local mall, your heroes have to seek hats from magical crystals.



Elementalist



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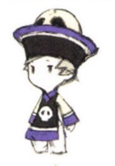
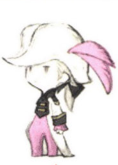
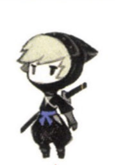


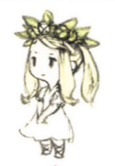
Monk



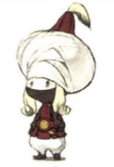
Musician



Ninja



Bard



Spell Fencer

Final Fantasy's Lord of Fours

Takashi Tokita reminisces about designing **FFIV** and directing **The 4 Heroes of Light**.

NINTENDO POWER **Do you have any favorite memories of playing games in the 8-bit era? How did those inspire Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes of Light?**

TAKASHI TOKITA At the time I had no idea our company [SquareSoft] would merge with [then-rival Enix], but every time a new Dragon Quest title came out we stocked up on food and held competitions to see who could clear the game the fastest. Whoever reached the ending first would record it on video, then share it with the rest of the staff. It was a time when many different game genres and worlds were being merged, and we were all filled with a sense of "you can make anything!" freedom.

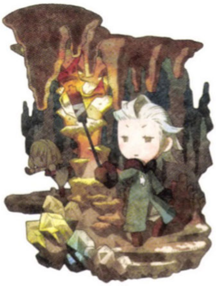
The classic RPG style represented by Dragon Quest, as well as our pursuit of answering "what were RPGs like back then?" were among the inspirations for Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes of Light.

Does The 4 Heroes of Light incorporate any unused ideas you had from when you were making games in the 8-bit era?

That was such a long time ago that I don't really remember.... [Laughs] It wasn't so much about utilizing ideas from the past, but sticking with a very classic, straightforward path, and staying true to the sentiment of, "how would I have handled this back in the day?"

Was The 4 Heroes of Light always intended to be a Final Fantasy game?

When development started, our mindset was to create a new IP. As we progressed, however, we came to the conclusion that it would be best to make the game an extension of the Final Fantasy series, so that players could jump right into its world. From there, we aligned the jobs and magic names with the rest of the series, but didn't enforce anything else in particular.



Your DS remake of Final Fantasy IV was also a very visually impressive game. Why did you decide to start from scratch with a new visual style?

With Final Fantasy IV, we were working with Mr. Amano's designs, creating a visual style based on a world that had already been imagined to a certain degree. This time around, we were very adamant about making a brand-new game, and created the visuals based on art director Akihiko Yoshida's ideas. Our goal was to craft a nostalgic, warm world with a fresh style.

What were some of the challenges you faced when developing the game's graphics engine?

With the world map we wanted a rounded horizon to portray an expansive world, and with the town maps we wanted to add depth by making them drum-shaped. Elaborate details, such as the weapons and armor the main characters carry on their backs, significantly increased the processing load. Thanks to the experience of the programmers who had worked hard developing Final Fantasy III and IV, we were able to realize everything with no compromises!

How important do you consider the music to be in capturing that old-school feel? What were the directions that you gave to the sound team?

Very important. We limited the sound channels we used, and focused on creating strong melodies as opposed to flashy arrangements. As gaming hardware advanced, the sound and memory capacity increased, introducing new possibilities for musical expression. However, the music was no longer as memorable as before. I think sticking to a handful of songs is an important way to leave an impression of the game world on players.

The game's limited inventory adds strategy, but has been controversial among players. Why did you decide to include this system?

The reason is similar to our thoughts on the music. If you can hold 99 of all items, there's less hassle but players are encouraged to constantly increase their inventory. By debating which items to give up and having to make tough sacrifices, each player's unique thought process really comes into play.

What was the inspiration for the game's battle system?

We wanted to decrease the selection of options to set a good pace for the battles. It might not be everyone's cup of tea, but we felt that the pace of a battle is especially important for handheld games and tuned the battles to match.

Why did you decide to add a modern multiplayer mode to an intentionally old-school RPG?

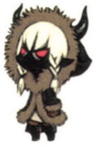
Especially because this game is for a handheld system like the DS, we wanted players to be able to share their adventures with each other through a multiplayer component. Thanks to the programming team's hard work, you can enjoy a nostalgic adventure alongside friends and family!

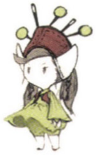
While I have many fond memories of old 8-bit RPGs, I often find them to be frustrating to play now that I've become accustomed to the more user-friendly games of recent years. What measures did you take to capture the nostalgic fun of older games without the frustrations?

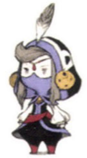
This is actually something we struggled with until the end of development. To us, it was basically a question of how far we go in standing by our concept of "going back to the roots." We did make some adjustments to help players along.

How did the experience of making this game differ from the experience of making the FFIII and FFIV remakes?

Because there is already an existing foundation, it's very easy to imagine remakes in their completed form. On the other hand, every time I work on a new project there's always an anxiety when thinking about how the game will turn out. The flipside to that is that it's such an exciting experience, filled with surprises and satisfactions from seeing the images, music, and programs come to life one element at a time. It's literally an adventure!


Beastmaster


Seamstress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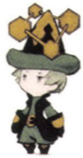
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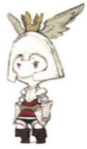
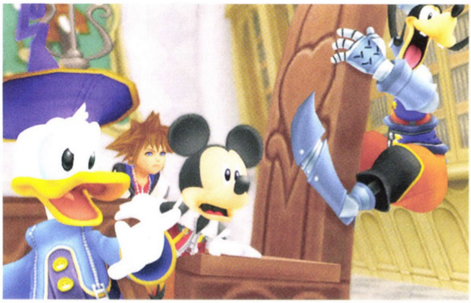
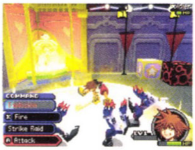

Paladin

Heart Transplant

Sora, Mickey, and company return to DS in **Kingdom Hearts Re:coded**.





BECAUSE YOU CAN NEVER have too much Kingdom Hearts goodness, Square Enix is bringing its popular Disney-themed action-RPG series back to DS with Kingdom Hearts Re:coded. An enhanced remake of a game previously available only on Japanese cell phones, the adventure focuses on a mysterious message that appears in Jiminy Cricket's journal, and a digitized Sora who explores "datascapes" that re-create many of the famous Kingdom Hearts locales. In typical Kingdom Hearts fashion, the complex story doesn't make a lot of sense, but it provides a fine excuse to bash enemies with your Keyblade and revisit places such as Destiny Islands, Traverse Town, Agrabah (from *Aladdin*), Olympus Coliseum (from *Hercules*), and Wonderland (from *Alice in Wonderland*). Although the environments are familiar, don't expect a straight-up rehash; new puzzle blocks that populate the worlds add a twist to the formula. Square Enix promises that the DS version features controls that are vastly superior to those of the original cell-phone game, along with an enhanced battle system and all-new gameplay content. As of press time, the game does not have a release date. —**CHRIS H.**

Third Time's the Charm

Rock Band 3 will teach you to rock. *For real.*

COMING AS A shock to absolutely no one, MTV Games has announced Rock Band 3, and developer Harmonix should deliver the goods in time for the holidays. The list of new features is heroic, but it all begins with tracks, of course: 83 songs by 83 unique bands, along with current-library compatibility and plenty of options for expanding your catalog online. To facilitate ever-growing song lists, Harmonix has redesigned the library to offer robust music management; rockers will manage (and share) set lists, navigate an improved sorting system, and receive recommendations for new tracks customized to their tastes.

While Harmonix has included features for casual fans, such as easy drop-in/drop-out and a no-fail mode, much of Rock Band 3 is geared toward the growing army of serious players. Road-hardened headbangers hungry for fresh challenges will find new ways to play along: keyboards (which utilize a new two-octave peripheral) and three-part vocal harmonies. Players ready to cast off their training wheels can take it a step further by delving into the promising Pro mode, which requires new, more-realistic peripherals that closely mimic real instruments. Incredibly, Rock Band 3 might teach us to play *real* drums, guitars, and keyboards. *Sweet.* —**PATRICK C.**

FRESH BEATS

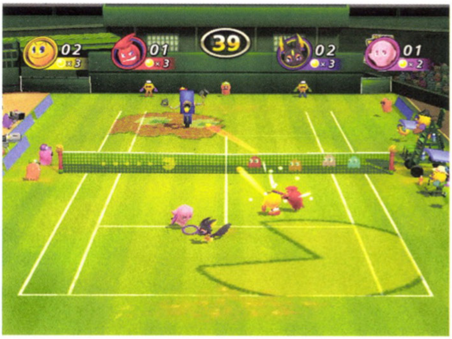
Scratch (and sing!) along to more mashed-up songs in **DJ Hero 2** for Wii.

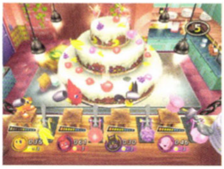
DESPITE THE oversaturation of rhythm games in 2009, DJ Hero managed to stand out from the pack thanks to its unique, um, *spin* on the genre. DJ Hero 2 takes the basic idea of the first game—using a turntable controller to play mashed-up versions of popular songs—and takes a few steps further with new content. In addition to the track list of over 70 new mash-ups (which include artists such as The Chemical Brothers, Deadmau5, Dr. Dre, Kanye West, and Lady Gaga), DJ Hero 2 has new modes such as Empire, in which you build an entertainment empire by DJing. If you'd prefer to play with friends, you can try the drop-in/drop-out Party Play (a feature from Guitar Hero 5), the head-to-head DJ Battle, or a multiplayer mode wherein two DJs man their own turntables while a third player uses a microphone to sing along to the track. We'll have more on DJ Hero 2 as the game's fall release nears. —**JUSTIN C.**

Wands of War

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 1 takes inspiration from an unlikely source: third-person shooters.

THE DAYS OF MIXING potions and playing Gobstones in our Harry Potter video games are over. With Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 1, EA's Bright Light studio is bringing a darker tone and a focus on combat to the storied franchise. It looks and plays a lot like a third-person shooter, in fact, with the titular wizard blasting foes via his wand and taking cover to avoid incoming attacks. You'll point the Wii Remote controller to aim said wand, and in addition to casting standard damage-dealing magic, you'll earn special spells like Confundus, which turns enemies to your side for a brief time. "The boy who lived" fights for his continued survival this autumn. —STEVE T.



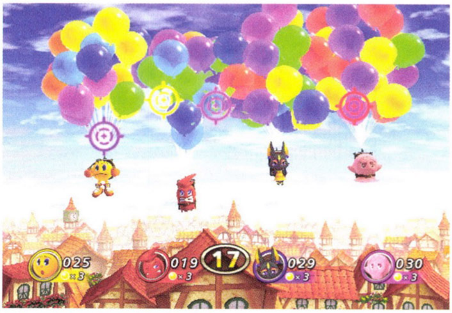


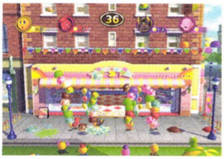
Family Pac

Namco Bandai is throwing a Pac-Man Party to celebrate the 30th birthday of its iconic mascot

IT'S BEEN THREE DECADES since Pac-Man first appeared in arcades, and Namco Bandai is holding the celebration on the Wii console. Pac-Man Party is a new multiplayer minigame collection featuring over 45 different challenges, each loosely based on the worlds and characters of Pac-Man and other classic Namco coin-ops. Players can practice specific minigames solo or play through them all in a single-player story mode, but the meat of the game rests in its multiplayer party mode. Party mode allows up to four players to choose a character and wield a Wii Remote as they compete for points on a variety of different game boards, triggering minigame challenges as they proceed along the paths. The structure is similar to that of games like Mario Party, but Pac-Man Party adds a Monopoly-esque wrinkle by permitting players to invest their points into developing property on game-board squares and allowing them to accrue points over time as well as win them in challenges.

The minigames include everything from mountaintop snowball races to tennis to cake-decorating, each with Pac-Man twists such as Power Cookies that provide boosts of size, speed, and power. Those who prefer to enjoy Pac-Man in its original form will find plenty to enjoy in the game's Classic mode, which features emulated versions of the original Pac-Man, Dig Dug, and Galaga coin-ops. Consider this your invitation—you can RSVP at your favorite gaming retailer this fall. **—CASEY L.**





BLINKY

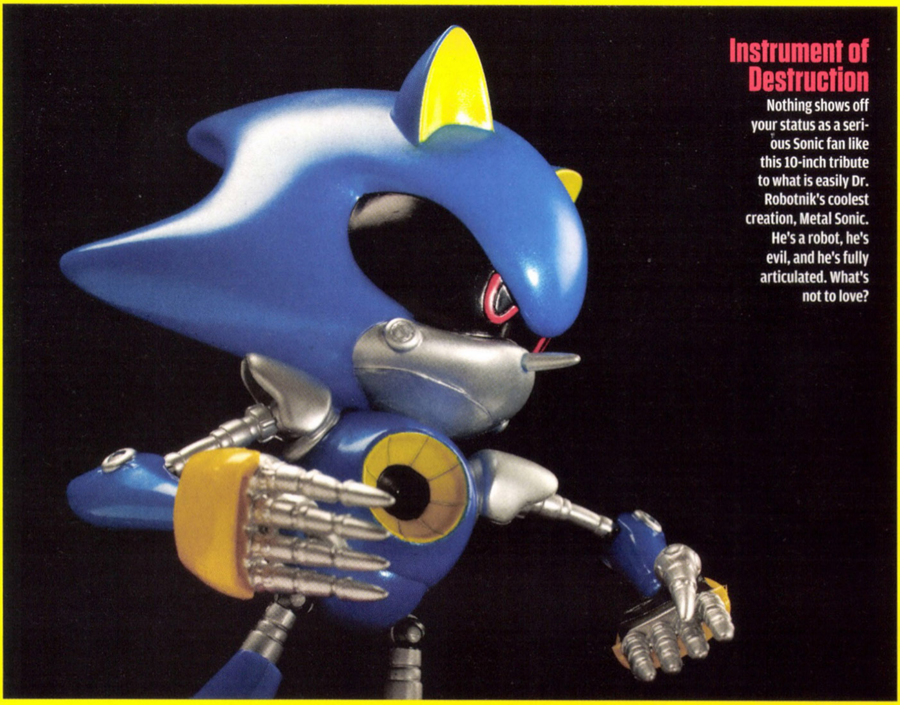
INKY

CLYDE

PINKY

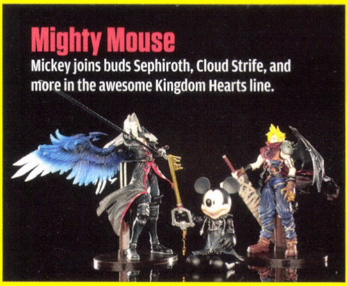
COLLECTOR'S CORNER

SERIOUSLY COOL STUFF FOR SERIOUS NINTENDO FANS



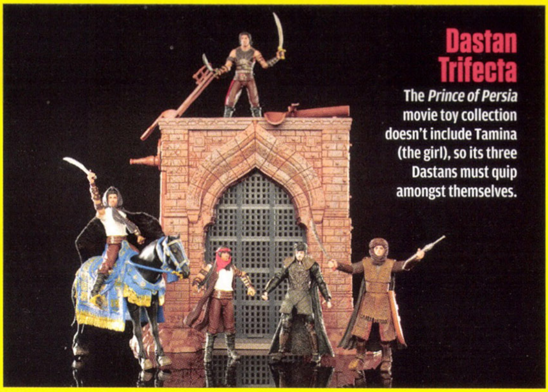
Instrument of Destruction

Nothing shows off your status as a serious Sonic fan like this 10-inch tribute to what is easily Dr. Robotnik's coolest creation, Metal Sonic. He's a robot, he's evil, and he's fully articulated. What's not to love?



Mighty Mouse

Mickey joins buds Sephiroth, Cloud Strife, and more in the awesome Kingdom Hearts line.



Dastan Trifecta

The *Prince of Persia* movie toy collection doesn't include Tamina (the girl), so its three Dastans must quip amongst themselves.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK MADEO

STAR POWER

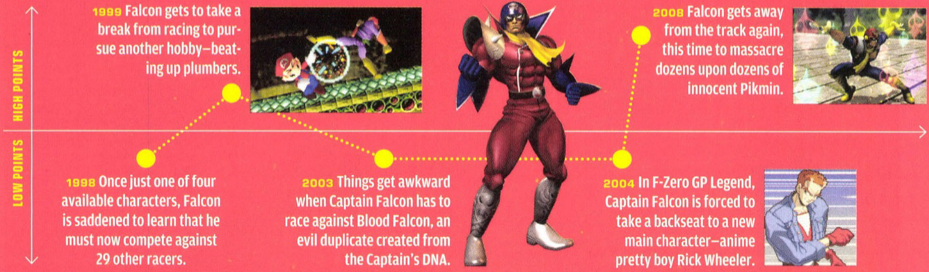
A closer look at the characters we love

FIRST APPEARANCE:
F-ZERO
SUPER NES, 1991

Captain Falcon

Whether he's racing or brawling, Captain Falcon's sense of burning justice ensures that he'll emerge in first place.

CAREER GRAPH



1998 Once just one of four available characters, Falcon is saddened to learn that he must now compete against 29 other racers.

1999 Falcon gets to take a break from racing to pursue another hobby—beating up plumbers.

2003 Things get awkward when Captain Falcon has to race against Blood Falcon, an evil duplicate created from the Captain's DNA.

2004 In F-Zero GP Legend, Captain Falcon is forced to take a backseat to a new main character—anime pretty boy Rick Wheeler.

2008 Falcon gets away from the track again, this time to massacre dozens upon dozens of innocent Pikmin.

OUR FAVORITE CAPTAIN FALCON GAMES

F-Zero

SUPER NES, 1991

As one of the first games available for the Super NES, F-Zero helped demonstrate the power of the 16-bit machine. And, hey, it was a pretty awesome racing game, too.

F-Zero X

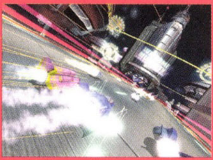
N64, 1998

Captain Falcon's first appearance in 3-D is notable for its blistering speed and the dozens of racers that are simultaneously on the track. The randomly generated X-Cup provided great replay value.

Super Smash Bros. Melee

GAMECUBE, 2001

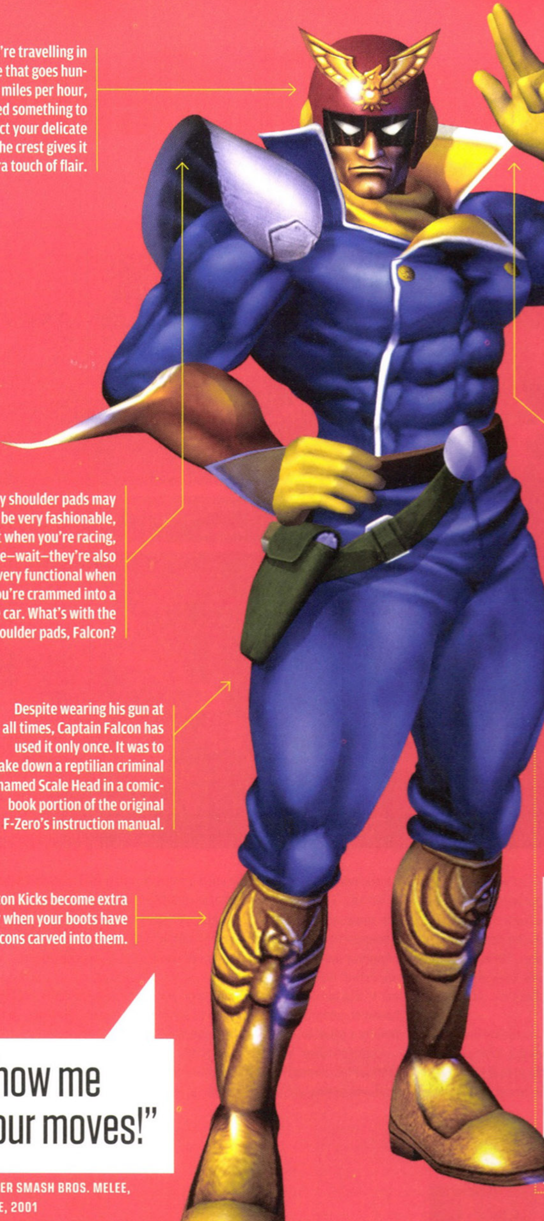
The good captain is in the first Super Smash Bros. as a hidden character, but in the sequel he's there right from the start. His combination of speed and power make him a popular fighter. Falcon PUNCH!!



F-Zero GX

GAMECUBE, 2003

This most recent F-Zero console game is notorious for its extreme difficulty. Additionally, you can use a memory card to link up with the F-Zero arcade game to unlock new vehicle parts and bonus features.



When you're travelling in a vehicle that goes hundreds of miles per hour, you need something to protect your delicate noggin. The crest gives it that extra touch of flair.

Bulky shoulder pads may not be very fashionable, but when you're racing, they're—wait—they're also not very functional when you're crammed into a race car. What's with the shoulder pads, Falcon?

Despite wearing his gun at all times, Captain Falcon has used it only once. It was to take down a reptilian criminal named Scale Head in a comic-book portion of the original F-Zero's instruction manual.

Falcon Kicks become extra falcony when your boots have falcons carved into them.

Falcon Punches look wicked-cool, but the harsh reality is that they involve your hands catching on fire. Protective gloves are required if you intend to keep your fingers after pummeling Link.

"Show me your moves!"

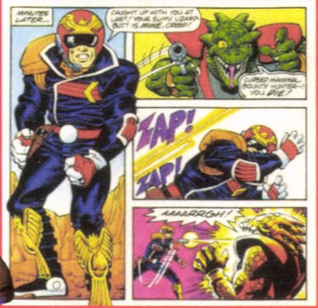
FROM SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE, GAMECUBE, 2001

FEELING BLUE

Although Captain Falcon is the defending F-Zero champ, his vehicle, the *Blue Falcon*, doesn't have the most impressive stats. According to the F-Zero GX instruction manual, the *Blue Falcon's* body and grip rate only a B, while its boost earns a C. Regardless, the captain's natural driving skills make up for any deficiencies.

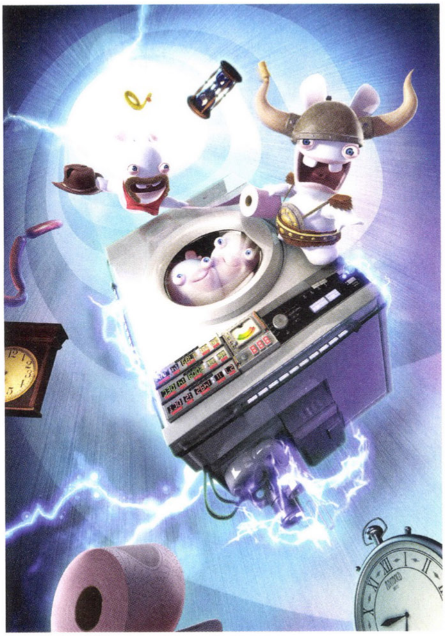
HUNTING SEASON

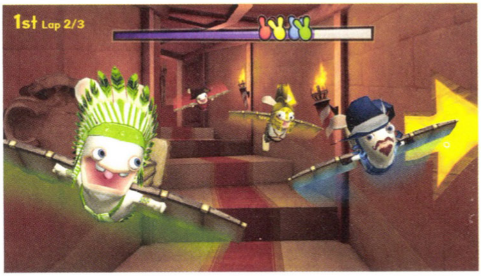
This hero from Port Town may be known as the champion of the F-Zero Grand Prix, but he also has a reputation as one of the most notorious bounty hunters around. Falcon frequently races against rival bounty hunter Samurai Goroh. Samus Aran has yet to enter any F-Zero tournaments, however.


MINUTES LATER...
CAUGHT UP WITH YOU AT LAST! YOUR SLIMY LIZARD BUTT IS MINE, CREEP!
CURSED MAMMAL BOUNTY HUNTER--! YOU DIE!
ZAP!
ZAP!
AAAARRRGH!

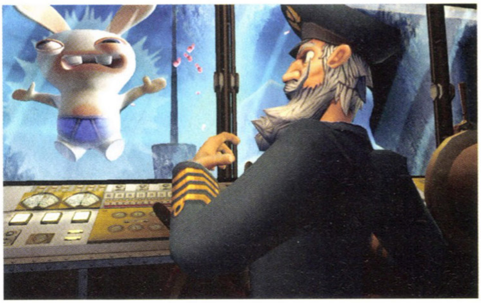
Chronologically Challenged

Get ready to rewrite history as the Raving Rabbids Travel in Time.





[Above] As in previous games, you'll earn an assortment of hats and costumes with which to customize your Rabbids.

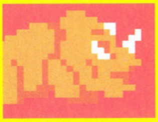


AFTER TAKING a more adventure-oriented diversion with last year's Rabbids Go Home, Ubisoft's lunatic lagomorphs get back to their partying ways with Raving Rabbids Travel in Time. The fifth installment of the franchise—in development at Ubisoft Paris—takes the same approach as the first three, assembling a collection of minigames for a multiplayer focus. This time around, the hijinks revolve around a time-travel theme, with the Rabbids hopping through history in a modified washing machine. (Hey, it's not much more ridiculous than a DeLorean.)

The package will include a total of 25 new minigames, including an airborne race through Renaissance Italy after the Rabbids get their paws on Leonardo da Vinci's flying machines. Players tilt the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers to steer, fly through rings for a speed boost, and snag power-ups to wreak havoc on each other. Among the collection's other offerings: a side-scrolling obstacle course on the deck of the *Titanic* and a top-down quest to keep the legendary blade Excalibur from falling into the wrong hands. Frequent cut-scenes highlight the franchise's trademark sense of humor and reveal that the Rabbids were actually responsible for such important historical events as the 1929 stock-market crash and the caveman's discovery of fire. Depending on your performance in the minigames, however, you might bear witness to an altered version of history: Arthur pulling a toilet brush from the stone, for example.

Some of Travel in Time's minigames will take advantage of the Wii MotionPlus accessory, and in another franchise first, players will be able to compete online when the Rabbids return this holiday season. **—STEVE T.**

A WINNER IS...
Our awesome new Zelda special, on sale now!



DODONGO DISLIKES...
Video games with arbitrary time limits.

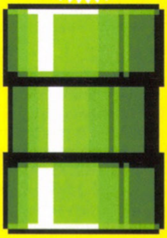
WARP ZONE

What we were writing about way back when

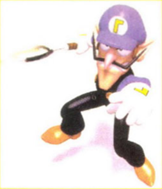
5 YEARS AGO

The phrase of the month in August 2005 was "Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection." Nintendo was committing to online gaming in a major way, and leading the charge was Mario Kart DS—which remained one of the system's best online-multiplayer games for years. The issue also featured a report on the 2005 E3 show, and it came bundled with a bonus DVD containing preview footage of upcoming games.

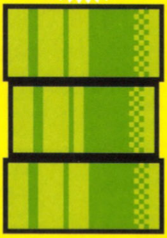
10 YEARS AGO



Mario took a break from his platforming ways and stepped onto the court in Mario Tennis for the Nintendo 64. Of course, plenty of other characters joined him, including—in his debut appearance—Luigi's dark rival, Waluigi. The other major release in August 2000 was the Game Boy Color version of Perfect Dark—a top-down action-adventure adaptation of the popular N64 first-person shooter.



20 YEARS AGO



Back in August 1990, Nintendo Power had just made the shift from bimonthly to monthly, and every other issue was a strategy guide entirely dedicated to a single game. The title in the spotlight 20 years ago: Tecmo's Ninja Gaiden II. August 1990 also marked the release of those pizza-munching dudes' first handheld adventure: Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Fall of the Foot Clan for Game Boy.

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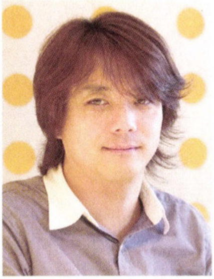
Level-5's Level Best

The creators of Professor Layton are ready to crack the mysteries of the North American game industry.



IN JAPAN, the rise of Level-5 has been the greatest third-party success story of the Nintendo DS generation. In 2006, the company was merely a well-regarded software developer famous for making the Dark Cloud series for Sony Computer Entertainment and handling the programming duties on Dragon Quest VIII. When Level-5 reps announced that they would self-publish their first original games in 2007, the news was met with a collective shrug. But that game turned out to be Professor Layton and the Curious Village, the first in a series that would sell over eight million copies worldwide. Launching an original intellectual property is considered a nearly impossible feat in Japan's sequel-driven industry, but the company repeated it only a year later with the release of Inazuma Eleven, a soccer-RPG that became the cornerstone of a massive multimedia franchise.

Now, only three years after getting into the publishing business, Level-5 stands as one of the largest third-party publishers in Japan, selling nearly two and a half million games a year. But outside of the Professor Layton series, which is published in Western markets by Nintendo, the company has little presence in the West. That's about to change: in September Level-5 will open its first American office in Santa Monica, California and begin self-publishing select titles; a similar branch is planned for Europe next year. While the company isn't quite ready to announce its North American publishing schedule, Level-5 president Akihiro Hino was happy to discuss the company's games, philosophies, and global ambitions in an exclusive interview with Nintendo Power.

NINTENDO POWER: You've spoken of viewing large American publishers like Electronic Arts and Ubisoft as models for Level-5. Why are you more attracted to the models of Western publishers than successful Japanese publishers like Capcom or Square Enix?

AKIHIRO HINO: Because I want Level-5 to be a major brand that is known throughout the world. In order to expand into the global entertainment industry, there are many things that we're going to have to learn about the Western game business from Western game companies.

Have your ambitions of becoming a worldwide publisher affected how you approach the development of your games?

Not significantly, no. As a game company, we're still going to be focused on making games that everyone can enjoy. However, I do want to make sure that we put a serious effort into localizing our games for each region, just as we do with the Professor Layton series (where we make new versions of some of the puzzles for the foreign releases, for example).

Do you have any games in development that you feel would be especially appealing to Western audiences?

At the moment, our titles are being created primarily with the Japanese market in mind. But once we establish a development apparatus overseas, I would like to try developing Western-focused titles as well.

While Japanese publishers who have focused on handheld game systems have been very successful in Japan, some feel it has made them less competitive internationally. Is this a concern for you?

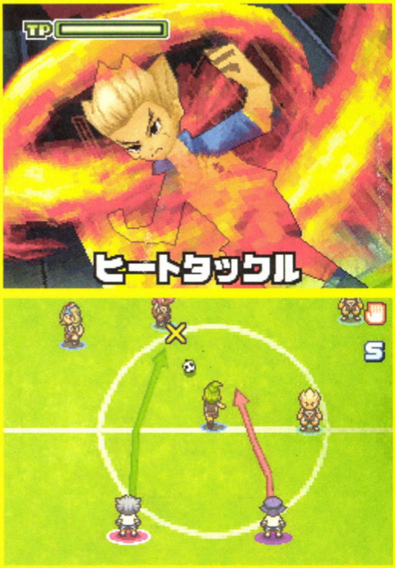
I'm not concerned at all. In the Japanese market we are indeed focusing heavily on handheld-game development, but the truth is that we're working on at least one AAA console game as well. You'll have to wait for an official announcement about that, though.

Why do you think the Inazuma Eleven franchise has resonated so strongly with Japanese consumers?

I think the key has been carefully timing the release of [the manga and animated series] so that the entire franchise was unfolding at once. It was also crucial that the games be the primary works that are leading the franchise, and not the other way around.

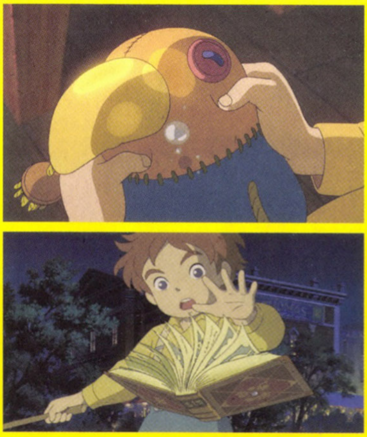
Inazuma Eleven

Inazuma ["Lightning"] Eleven is a series of sports-RPGs in which talented young soccer players recruit teammates, practice their skills, and lead their schools to the championships. The combination of genres seems a strange one, but the DS touch screen lends itself perfectly to an intuitive team-vs.-team battle system. It's the sort of innovative idea that often has a tough time finding a foothold in the video game marketplace, but Level-5 bet big on its success, creating an entire franchise to support the title. The game launched alongside a serialized manga and an animated television series, and a game sequel was already deep in development at launch time. The plan worked: The series was a smash hit and a third game is scheduled for release later this year.



Ninokuni: The Another World

A poignant RPG about a boy visiting a parallel world in search of a way to bring back his dead mother, Ninokuni has been in development for more than two years. The game is scheduled to ship with an oversized book that, among other things, reveals magical runes that players can draw on the DS touch screen to cast spells. But one of the game's main selling points is the 15 minutes of original animation being contributed by Japan's legendary Studio Ghibli, the creators of such notable animated films as *My Neighbor Totoro, Ponyo,* and the Academy Award-winning *Spirited Away.* A dislike of the medium and a few bad experiences with early partnerships led the studio to refuse collaborations with even the most powerful companies in the video game industry, so forging this partnership was a major coup for Level-5.



Do you think you can replicate that success in the West?
I do believe that Inazuma Eleven would succeed in the west.

Level-5 has had great success at launching games as multimedia franchises, a tactic that has backfired badly for other publishers. What's the secret to your success?
I think you have to develop all of the different media (the game, anime, and manga) as a single work with a consistent worldview. If you take each piece of a multimedia franchise and let different creators do whatever they want with them, they may all end up as good products, but the users won't recognize them as a single work. It's important to keep it all under one umbrella.

Tell us about how Ninokuni: The Another World came about. How was Level-5 able to forge a partnership with Studio Ghibli, which is said to have refused nearly every other publisher in the industry?
Honestly, it was just a case of good timing. We were able to meet with the producers at Studio Ghibli right when production was winding down on their end [after the completion of the *Ponyo* film], so it was a perfect time for them to collaborate with us on a new venture.

What do you think of the prospects of a game like Ninokuni: The Another World in North America, where orthodox RPGs are less popular than they are in Japan?
There are a lot of interesting mechanics in Ninokuni. For example, the game comes packaged with a book that players must use in order to progress through the game. I can't help but think that such new and experimental elements would appeal to American players just as much as they would to players in Japan.

In a February speech, you mentioned that Level-5 had at least one unannounced Wii title in development. When will we be able to hear more about that?
We're not yet at the stage where we can talk about that. We'll make an official announcement when the time is right.

What can you tell us about the recently announced Time Travelers game? Can we expect to see a Western release?
Time Travelers is another game that we've only just begun to work on, so there isn't much that I can say about it. We are thrilled to have new director Jiro Ishii working with us, and the game is full of new challenges for Level-5, so it's definitely one to look forward to!

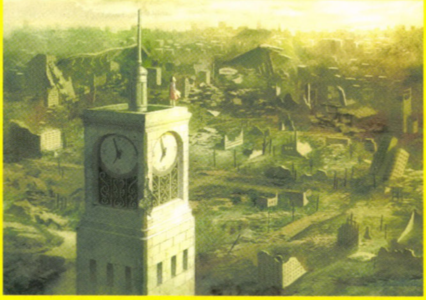
Do you see the upcoming release of the Nintendo 3DS as an opportunity for Level-5 to launch new franchises? What are your thoughts about the hardware?
I think the launch of a new platform always presents new opportunities—not only to develop new games, but to pursue all sorts of new challenges. We are extremely interested in the Nintendo 3DS platform, and are eager to meet the development challenges it presents.

How do you envision the future of Level-5, say, five years from now?
First of all, I would like for Level-5 to be perceived as one of the driving forces in the Japanese game industry. Next, I would like for the Level-5 brand to be recognized worldwide.

Do you have a message for your future American fans?
There are several titles that I am eager to introduce to North America, including Professor Layton and the Unwound Future, and the Inazuma Eleven series—both of which are already out in Japan—and Ninokuni: The Another World, which is still in development. I don't think it will that be long before you're able to play these games, so please look forward to them!

—CASEY L. (WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO DAI KOHAMA)

Time Travelers



Hino recently announced a new game titled Time Travelers that will run on "game hardware that doesn't yet exist." In Japan, the most surprising part of the announcement was the name of the game's director; Jiro Ishii is regarded as a major new talent in the Japanese game industry, having helmed Chunsoft's critically lauded 428: In the Blocked City, Shibuya (a visual novel for the Wii console that was never localized for Western markets). He also worked on other Chunsoft titles, including the Pokémon Mystery Dungeon series. Time Travelers is said to feature a unique take on time travel that has never been attempted in any film or game.

NEWS *from* JAPAN

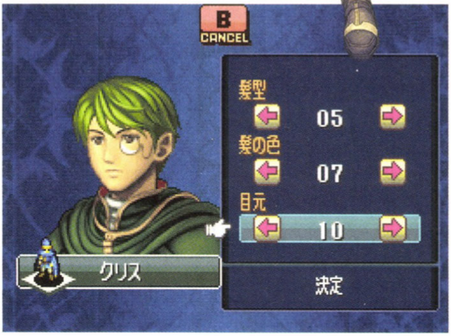
Japan's Summer of RPGs

A new DS **Fire Emblem** remake joins **The Last Story** on Nintendo's rich slate of Japanese role-playing games.

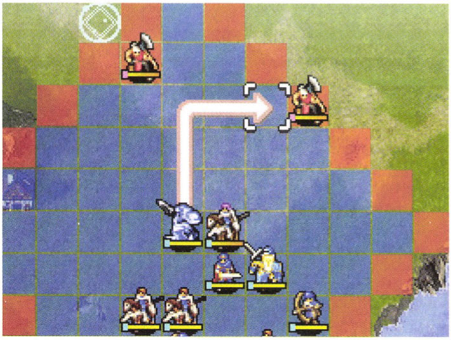
DESPITE A SCHEDULE already packed with Golden Sun on DS and Xenoblade and The Last Story on Wii, Nintendo of Japan has found room for one more fantasy-RPG. Following in the footsteps of last year's Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon, a remake of Marth's second Fire Emblem adventure, originally created for the Super Famicom, is headed to DS. The new version is subtitled Heroes of Light and Shadow, a reference to the game's most significant addition: players can create an avatar of themselves to act as the Hero of Shadow, a young knight who was forgotten to history but played a pivotal role in supporting Marth, the Hero of Light. This new scenario serves as a prologue to the game's original story and continues in side missions that can be triggered throughout the game.

The Fire Emblem series is both beloved and reviled for the permanent death that faces any hero who falls in battle. Recent games have tried to remedy this in various ways, but Heroes of Light and Shadow is the first game in the series to feature an optional Casual mode in which fallen characters simply come back to life at the end of each map. The game is scheduled for a July release in Japan.

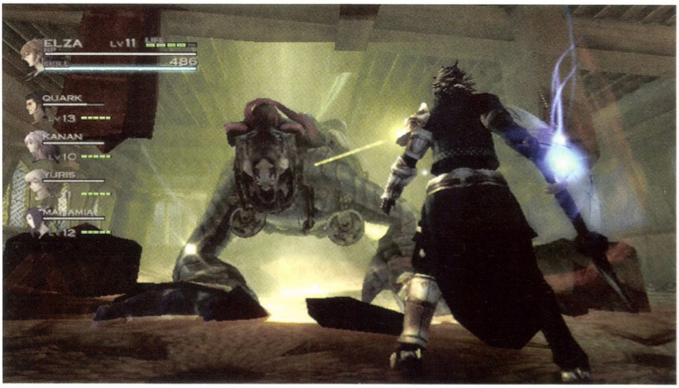
Additionally, Nintendo has begun to release details and images of its next Wii RPG epic: The Last Story. The game is looking fantastic, and its mix of real-time and turn-based elements should please fans of modern RPGs like Final Fantasy XII. Players will directly control only the game's main character, a young

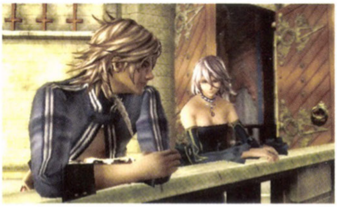


[Above] You want your Hero of Shadow to wear a snooty monocle? No one can stop you from living your dream.



ドーガ
ならず者
はがねの槍
てつの斧
22
1
威力 17 命中 77 必殺 2
威力 3 命中 84 必殺 0



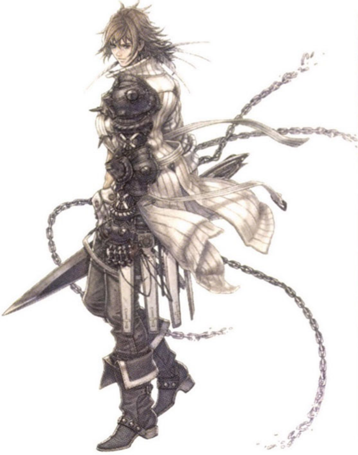


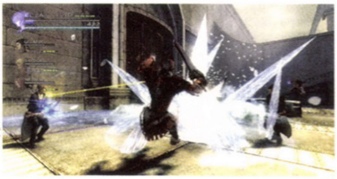
[Left] We sense an FFVIII-style dance sequence coming...

mercenary named Elza. But Elza will not be fighting alone; he can party up with as many as four additional computer-controlled allies.

On his first mission after arriving on the island of Ruri, Elza encounters a mysterious magical force in a cave full of ancient ruins. The experience leaves him with a unique power that emanates from his glowing right hand. This power is the cornerstone of the game's real-time battle system; it allows Elza to capture the attention of his foes, drawing attacks to him that would otherwise go to his allies. Many of Elza's comrades, including the game's heroine, Kanan, are mages who can cast powerful but time-consuming magic spells. As Elza, players will need to strategically manipulate foes to ensure that your spellcasters are able to do their jobs without interference, without being overwhelmed by enemy attacks yourself.

While much remains to be revealed, The Last Story is already shaping up to be an exciting addition to Nintendo's RPG lineup. Hopefully the next batch of details will include a more specific date; the game is still listed only as a 2010 release for the Japanese market. **—CASEY L.**





[Above] Elza distracts the foe while a spellcaster drops the bomb.

POWER QUIZ

EASY

What surprising fact do you learn about Samus Aran at the end of the original Metroid?

AVERAGE

In Metroid II: Return of Samus, how many Metroids must be destroyed on planet SR388?

HARDCORE

What creatures can Samus rescue at the end of Super Metroid?

ANSWERS

EASY: Samus is a woman. AVERAGE: 39. HARDCORE: A Dachora and three Etecoons.

GAME FORECAST

READERS' MOST WANTED

Vote for your favorites at www.nintendopower.com/polls

1 The Legend of Zelda*

2 Metroid: Other M

3 Super Scribblenauts

4 Sonic Colors (Wii)
5 Epic Mickey
6 Sonic Colors (DS)
7 Golden Sun DS*
8 Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II (Wii)
9 LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1–4 (Wii)
10 Okamiden

Wii

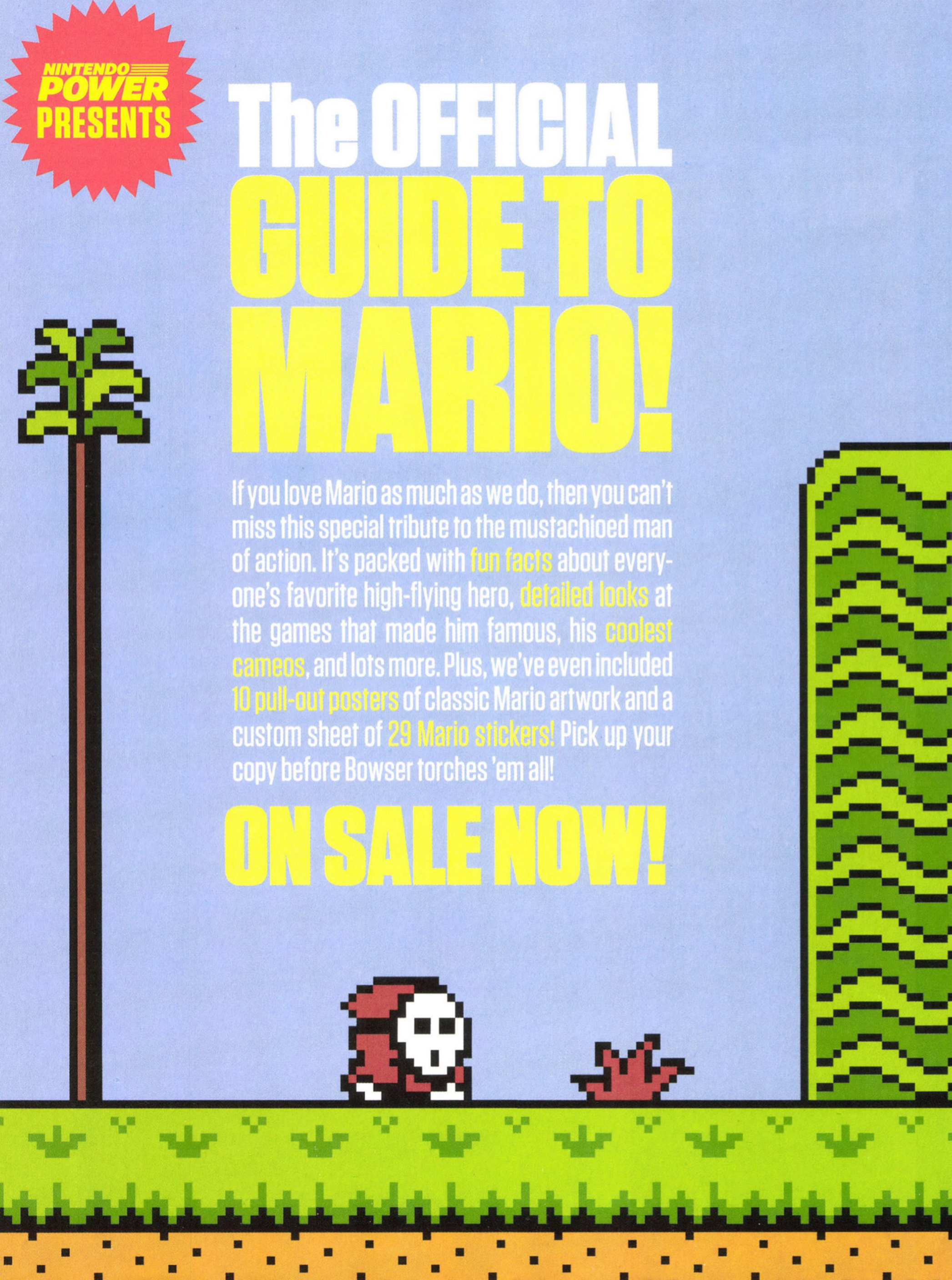
AAA Lucha Libre Heroes of the Ring	Konami	8/10
Active Life Explorer	Namco Bandai	FALL 10
Babysitting Mama	Majesco	HOL 10
Bakugan Battle Brawlers: Defenders of the Core	Activision	FALL 10
Batman: The Brave and the Bold: The Videogame	Warner Bros.	9/10
Battle Vs Chess	SouthPeak	FALL 10
Ben 10 Ultimate Alien: Cosmic Destruction	D3Publisher	10/10
Big Beach Sports 2	THQ	8/10
Call of Duty: Black Ops	Activision	11/10
Conduit 2	Sega	FALL 10
de Blob: The Underground	THQ	SPR 11
Deca Sports 3	Hudson	FALL 10
Def Jam Rapstar	Konami	10/10
DJ Hero 2	Activision	FALL 10
Driver San Francisco	Ubisoft	HOL 10
EA Sports Active 2.0*	Electronic Arts	FALL 10
Enclave: Shadows of Twilight	TopWare	2010
Epic Mickey	Disney	FALL 10
Family Party: Fitness Fun	D3Publisher	9/10
FlingSmash	Nintendo	SUM 10
Flip's Twisted World	Majesco	9/10
Ghost Recon: Future Soldier	Ubisoft	HOL 10
Gold's Gym Dance Workout	Ubisoft	8/10
Gormiti: The Lords of Nature!	Konami	2010
Grease: The Game	505	9/10
Greg Hastings Paintball 2	Majesco	9/10
The Grinder	TBA	TBA
Guilty Party	Disney	8/10
Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock	Activision	FALL 10
Gunblade NY and LA Machineguns Arcade Hits Pack	Sega	FALL 10
Hard Grip: The Climbing Game	TBA	TBA
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 1	Electronic Arts	FALL 10
Ivy the Kiwi?	XSEED	SUM 10
Jeopardy!	THQ	FALL 10
Kidz Bop Dance Party! The Video Game	D3Publisher	9/10
Legend of the Guardians	Warner Bros.	9/10
The Legend of Zelda*	Nintendo	TBA
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	Q4 10
Line Attack Heroes	Nintendo	TBA
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	Warner Bros.	9/10
Lost in Shadow	Hudson	FALL 10
Madden NFL 11	EA Sports	8/10
Metroid: Other M	Nintendo	8/10
Monopoly Streets	Electronic Arts	FALL 10
Mr. T	TBA	TBA
MySims SkyHeroes	Electronic Arts	FALL 10
NBA Jam	EA Sports	FALL 10
NCIS	Ubisoft	2011
New Carnival Games	2K Play	FALL 10
NHL 2K11	2K Sports	FALL 10
NHL Slapshot	EA Sports	9/10
Nickelodeon Fit	2K Play	11/10
Pac-Man Party	Namco Bandai	FALL 10
Pro Evolution Soccer 2011	Konami	FALL 10
Pyroblazer	TBA	TBA
Raving Rabbids Travel in Time	Ubisoft	HOL 10
Rock Band 3	MTV Games	HOL 10
Rock of the Dead	Conspiracy	10/10
Sengoku Basara Samurai Heroes	Capcom	9/10
Samurai Warriors 3	Nintendo	FALL 10
Scooby-Doo! and the Spooky Swamp	Warner Bros.	FALL 10
Shaun White Skateboarding	Ubisoft	Q4 10
Sid Meier's Pirates!	2K	FALL 10
The Sims 3	Electronic Arts	FALL 10
Sky Pirates of Neo Terra	Aspyr	TBA
Sonic Colors	Sega	FALL 10
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	Activision	9/10
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	LucasArts	10/10
Stratusphere	TBA	TBA
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	Ubisoft	FALL 10
TrackMania	Dream-Catcher	7/10
Truth or Lies	THQ	FALL 10
Wheel of Fortune	THQ	FALL 10
WWE All Stars	THQ	2011
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2011	THQ	10/10

NINTENDO DS

Bakugan Battle Brawlers: Defenders of the Core	Activision	FALL 10
Batman: The Brave and the Bold: The Videogame	Warner Bros.	9/10
Battle Vs Chess	SouthPeak	FALL 10
Ben 10 Ultimate Alien: Cosmic Destruction	D3Publisher	10/10
Crafting Mama	Majesco	FALL 10
de Blob: The Underground	THQ	SPR 11
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie	Square Enix	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Chain Reaction	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Critical Mass	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Proving Grounds	Deep Silver	TBA
Easy Piano	Valcon	2010
Etrian Odyssey III: The Drowned City	Atlus	FALL 10
Fancy Nancy	THQ	SUM 10
Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes of Light	Square Enix	10/10
Galactic Taz Ball	Warner Bros.	FALL 10
Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective	Capcom	FALL 10
Ghostwire: Link to the Paranormal	Majesco	10/10
Golden Sun DS	Nintendo	2010
Gormiti: The Lords of Nature!	Konami	2010
Grease	505	TBA
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 1	Electronic Arts	FALL 10
Harvest Moon: Grand Bazaar	Natsume	7/10
Ivy the Kiwi?	XSEED	SUM 10
Jeopardy!	THQ	FALL 10
Kingdom Hearts Re:coded	Square Enix	TBA
Legend of the Guardians	Warner Bros.	9/10
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	Q4 10
Littlest Pet Shop 3: Biggest Stars—Blue Team	Electronic Arts	FALL 10
Littlest Pet Shop 3: Biggest Stars—Pink Team	Electronic Arts	FALL 10
Littlest Pet Shop 3: Biggest Stars—Purple Team	Electronic Arts	FALL 10
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	Warner Bros.	9/10
Lufia: Curse of the Sinistrals	Natsume	2010
Monopoly	Electronic Arts	FALL 10
Monster Tale	Majesco	12/10
MySims SkyHeroes	Electronic Arts	FALL 10
NCIS	Ubisoft	2011
New Carnival Games	2K Play	FALL 10
Okamiden	Capcom	2011
Paws & Claws Regal Resort	THQ	SUM 10
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Pokémon Black Version	Nintendo	SPR 11
Pokémon White Version	Nintendo	SPR 11
Puzzle Overload	Telegames	SPR 10
Rune Factory 3: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	Natsume	FALL 10
The Sims 3	Electronic Arts	FALL 10
Solitaire Overload Plus	Telegames	2010
Sonic Colors	Sega	FALL 10
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	Activision	9/10
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	LucasArts	10/10
Super Scribblenauts	Warner Bros.	FALL 10
Wheel of Fortune	THQ	FALL 10

ANNOUNCED FOR NORTH AMERICA!

RED TEXT = TITLES ADDED THIS MONTH. * TENTATIVE TITLE **NOTE:** RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE.



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- CHESS CHALLENGE!
- DIVE: THE MEDES ISLANDS SECRET
- MANIC MONKEY MAYHEM
- PHOENIX WRIGHT: ACE ATTORNEY TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS
- ROBOCALYPSE: BEAVER DEFENSE
- VIRAL SURVIVAL
- VOODOO DICE

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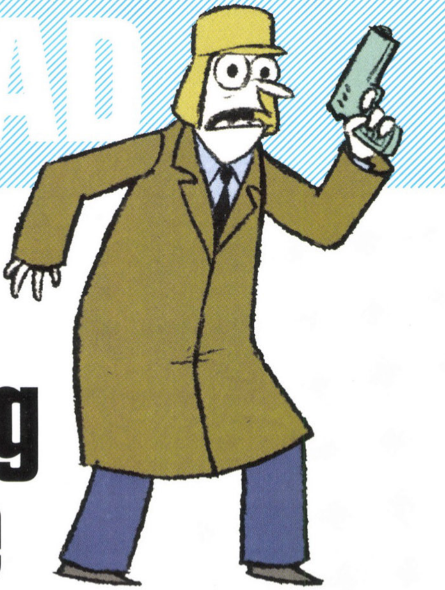
- X-SCAPE



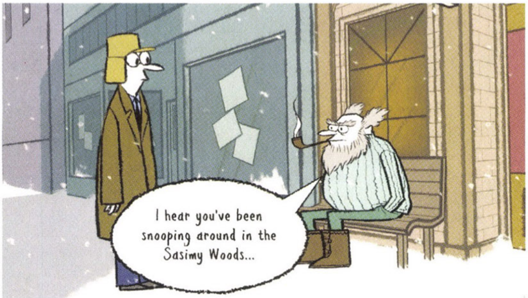
A Cold & Calculating Adventure

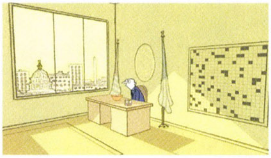
Neither frigid temperatures nor mind-bending riddles will stop Nelson Tethers in **Puzzle Agent** for WiiWare.

WHEN THE US GOVERNMENT is faced with the threat of confounding puzzles, there's only one man for the job—Nelson Tethers. The sole member of the FBI's Department of Puzzle Research, Tethers has been idling the days away with nothing to do in his lonely basement office, but when the White House stops receiving erasers from its official provider and begins receiving complex puzzles whenever someone inquires about the matter, Tethers is assigned to the case. The matter of the missing erasers takes Tethers to the snowy town of Scoggins, Minnesota, where more puzzles—and even greater mysteries—await. It's up to you to find out what's afoot by solving the riddles of Puzzle Agent, the latest WiiWare title from Telltale Games.

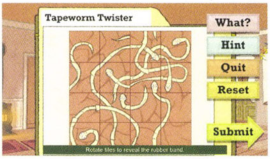
Unlike Telltale's previous games (such as the five-part "seasons" of Tales of Monkey Island and Strong Bad's Cool Game for Attractive People), Puzzle Agent isn't about navigating environments or finding and using items to get through tricky situations. Instead, Puzzle Agent takes a page from the Professor Layton games for the Nintendo DS handheld—you interact with scenes through a point-and-click interface, and solve a myriad of self-contained brain-teasers, including number puzzles, visual puzzles, logic puzzles, mazes, and more.

"[Professor Layton] was definitely a huge influence from the way that the puzzles are presented," admits producer Matt Hansen, "but we've taken our own spin with contextualizing them and adding a lot of character to each puzzle." The first challenge, for example, occurs when Tethers wakes from a spooky dream; in a panic, he tears up a crossword puzzle he was working on, and you have to reassemble it, jigsaw-style. Another puzzle occurs when Tethers attempts to check

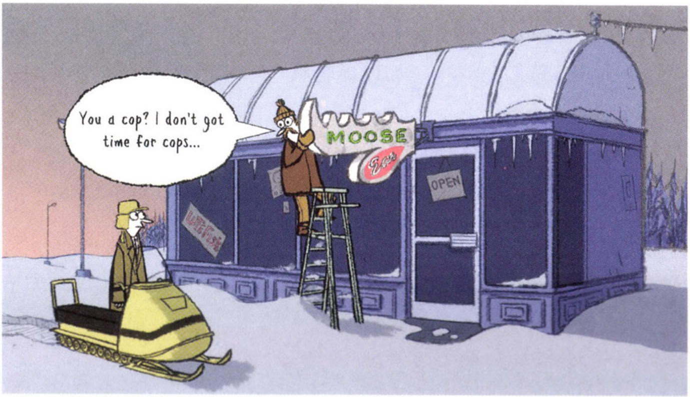


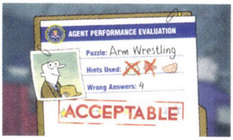


[Below] When you've got tapeworm trouble, Nelson Tethers is ready to help.



Rotate tiles to reveal the rubber band.


You a cop? I don't got time for cops...
MOOSE Ear
OPEN


AGENT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

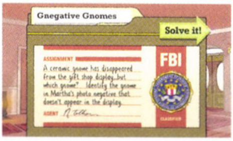
Puzzle: Arm Wrestling

Hints Used:

Wrong Answers: 4

ACCEPTABLE

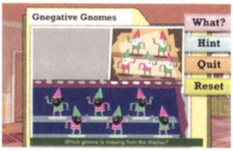
[Above] After every puzzle, you receive an assessment of your work.


Gnegative Gnomes
Solve it!
FBI
CLASSIFIED

ASSIGNMENT

A ceramic gnome has disappeared from the gift shop display...but which gnome? Identify the gnome in Martha's photo negative that doesn't appear in the display.

AGENT


Gnegative Gnomes
What?
Hint
Quit
Reset

Which gnome is missing from the display?

into his hotel room in Scoggins; you must decode a scribble to figure out which room he's staying in.

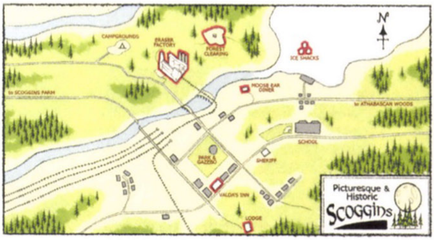
Other puzzles include identifying which of the hotel manager's figurines is missing by examining a photographic negative; rotating parts of an X-ray image to find a rubber band that someone swallowed; drawing lines to enclose bugs in boxes; and using clues to bring the proper meal to each restaurant patron. There are more than 50 puzzles in all.

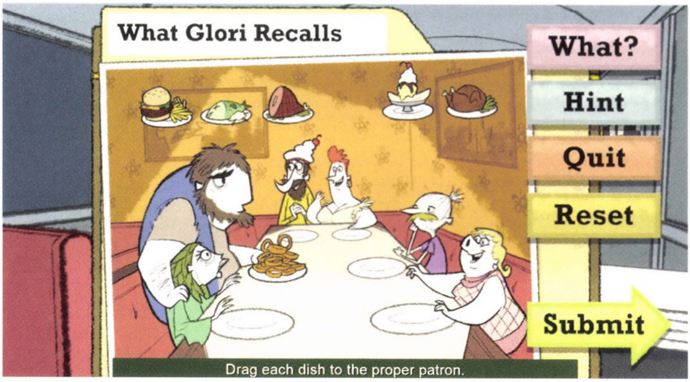
Naturally, there's more to the game than just solving puzzles. Though you don't move your character around the locales like in Telltale's previous games, there are numerous places to visit—including the Moose Ear diner, an ice-fishing hole, a lodge, a forest, and the fabled eraser factory—and you'll get to investigate anything of interest with your cursor. When you click an area, the cursor emits a radar-like wave that shows you anything interactive that's nearby. If you're lucky, you'll find a piece of chewing gum that you can exchange for a hint if you get stuck while working on a puzzle. (Apparently Tethers thinks better when he's chewing.)

As you traverse Scoggins, you'll come across a variety of quirky characters, such as hotel manager Martha Garrett, local law enforcer Sheriff Bahg, and a group of Nordic nature-worshippers. "There's a lot of really unique personalities to the characters," comments Hansen. "You're not quite sure what everybody's true motives are." And then, of course, there are the gnomes. Tiny little gnomes seem to be running wild in Scoggins, and what they're up to is anybody's guess. As you can tell, Puzzle Agent has a decidedly offbeat sense of humor to go with its *Fargo*-esque setting and *Twin Peaks*-style mysteries.

Puzzle Agent also features a distinctive, minimalist art style created by former Telltale creative director Graham Annable. Known as Grickle, the art style can be seen in Annable's comics (publisher Dark Horse recently printed a *Book of Grickle*) and online videos, and it lends the game a visual presence that's unlike anything else on WiiWare.

Given that the game has so many deviations from the standard Telltale formula, it's unsurprising that it's being developed as a standalone product, not an episodic series. In fact, the game is the first in what Telltale representatives are calling their "pilot program"—projects they find interesting but might be too offbeat or risky for a bigger commitment. As the branding implies, however, if Puzzle Agent is a hit, players might be treated to subsequent installments; though the game is being designed to have a satisfying story, every question may not be completely answered by the time the adventure draws to a close. We won't have to wait long to see if the game is worthy of a follow-up; it's scheduled to hit WiiWare this summer, and it might even be out by the time you read this. —**CHRIS H.**


N
CAMPGROUNDS
ERASER FACTORY
FOREST CLEARING
ICE SHACKS
to SCOGGINS FARM
MOOSE EAR DINER
to ATHABASCAN WOODS
SCHOOL
PARK & GAZEBO
SHERIFF
VALDA'S INN
LODGE
Picturesque & Historic
SCOGGINS


What Glori Recalls
What?
Hint
Quit
Reset
Submit

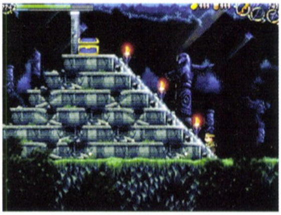
Drag each dish to the proper patron.

What Lies Beneath

Retro-style WiiWare adventure **La-Mulana** is overflowing with old-school goodness.

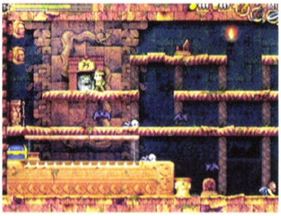
WE'VE BEEN DISHING UP details on Nicalis's upcoming action-adventure game La-Mulana for months now, and with good reason: not only does the game promise to be one of the deepest titles on WiiWare, but it could very well be one of the best. We once again traveled into the depths of the ancient La-Mulana ruins—where archeologist Lemeza Kosugi is attempting to find his father—to take a closer look at some of the places, creatures, and items you'll encounter during the expedition. Believe us when we say that we're still only scratching the surface of this epic quest. —**CHRIS H.**

EXOTIC LOCATIONS! Diverse, dangerous areas will put you to the test.



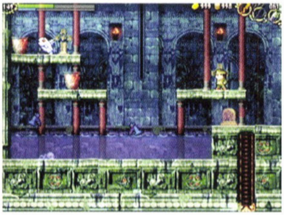
THE SURFACE

Before you reach the ruins proper, you'll explore the places nearby, including a small village.



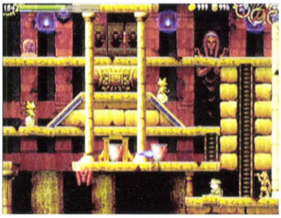
GUIDANCE GATE

This area branches off to many other areas. Its passages are lined with the skeletal remains of unwary adventurers.



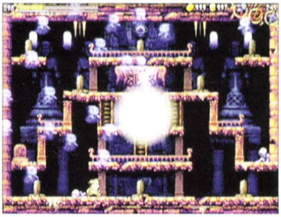
SKY WATER SOURCE

Rushing water powers a variety of ancient machines. You'll need special gear to get through the water unharmed.



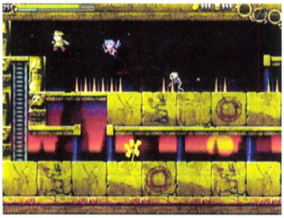
SUN SHRINE

This area of the ruins seems inspired by the Egyptian culture. You'll encounter bizarre enemies and tricky traps.



GIANT MAUSOLEUM

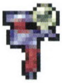
We don't know what was entombed here, but we do know that the area is now full of ghosts.



INFINITE CORRIDOR

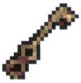
This chamber will go on forever if you're not careful. In it you'll find mystical fairies that will give you aid.

INDISPENSABLE ITEMS! This is but a sample of the many items that will help you on your journey.



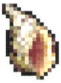
HANDY SCANNER

This device allows you to scan text that's etched onto stone tablets.



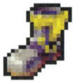
INFINITE KEY

A key that's used to unlock seals in the mysterious Infinite Corridor.



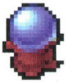
CHARONIA TRITONIS

Crafted from a shell, this tool makes a sound to notify you when a secret is nearby.



HERMES SHOES

Named after the fleet-footed messenger of the gods, these shoes increase your speed.

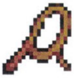


GEM OF LIFE

This extremely useful item extends your life bar and refills your health.

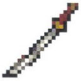
MIGHTY WEAPONS!

The ruins are packed with danger. You'll need these implements to survive.



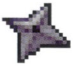
LEATHER WHIP

This is the weapon you begin the game with. It's not the best, but it gets the job done.



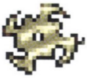
KATANA

It slices! It dices! It carves up enemies!



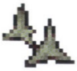
SHURIKEN

The first of many "sub-weapons" you'll collect. The ammo supply is limited.



WHEEL SHURIKEN

This unusual shuriken rolls along the ground, cutting down anything in its path.



MAKIBISHI

After you scatter these weapons on the ground, any enemy that touches them will take damage.

HELPFUL PROGRAMS

Because a modern archaeologist never goes exploring without his portable PC!

OLD DOCUMENT READER

Used in conjunction with the Handy Scanner, this program lets you translate ancient writings.

XELPUD MAILER

A mail program given to you by the local village elder, Xelpud. He'll contact you with hints and info.

GURUGURU MAP

Yep, it's a map program. Very useful when exploring labyrinthine ruins!

RETEXTS

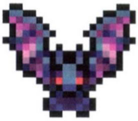
This program lets you record important messages for later reference.

ROSE AND CAMELLIA

Strangely enough, this is a slap-fighting game for Lemeza's PC. It's one of many game programs that boost his stats.

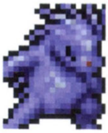
EVIL ENEMIES!

Each area of the game is packed with its own brand of nasty enemies.



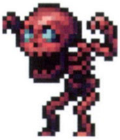
BAT

Bats aren't the most threatening enemies, but their erratic flight patterns can be annoying.



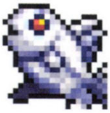
HEDGE

There's a blue hedgehog running wild in the ruins. Somebody notify Sega, ASAP!



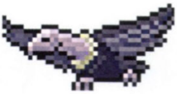
RED SKELETON

Bigger and tougher than regular white skeletons, red skeletons are capable of projectile attacks.



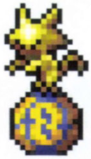
FISH MAN

These aquatic foes are probably delicious when battered and fried.



CONDOR

Condors fly around outside the ruins, diving at anyone who gets too close.

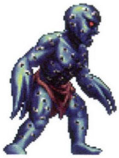


CAIT-SITH

Your eyes aren't deceiving you—that's a kitty-cat on a ball. These creatures patrol the Sun Shrine.

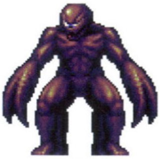
TERRIFYING BOSSES!

You'll need both brains and brawn to overcome the ruins' strongest foes.



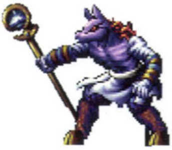
ARGUS

This freaky enemy's body is covered with eyeballs. He's invincible unless you obtain an item called the Snake Wand.



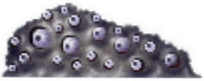
NUCKELAVEE

An imposing crustaceanlike foe that guards the Sky Water Source. He can fire laser beams from his eyes.



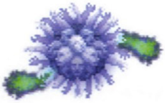
ANUBIS

Named after the Egyptian god of death, Anubis uses magic to drain the life from humans.



TAI-SUI

There's no way to defeat this monster under normal circumstances. You must solve a mystery first.

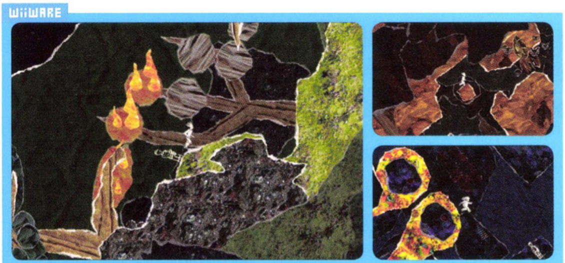


HECATONCHEIR

Numerous arms and faces sprout from the core of this ghastly enemy.

EVALUATION STATION

WiiWARE



AND YET IT MOVES

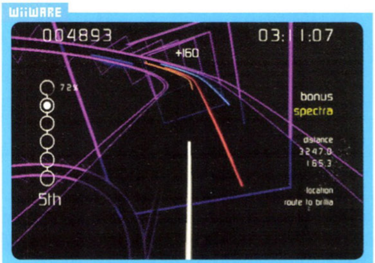
PUBLISHER: **BROKEN RULES** GENRE: **PLATFORMER** Wii POINTS: **TBD**

Justin C's Pick

From the moment I set eyes on puzzle-platformer And Yet It Moves, I knew I wanted to play it. This WiiWare title has a distinct visual style—the levels look as if they're assembled using torn pieces of construction paper—and a unique gameplay hook: you rotate the world (using the motion controls of the Wii Remote) to reach the end-level goal. This gravity- and momentum-based gameplay offers plenty of challenge as you try to figure out how to reach new areas; it never gets too frustrating, though, thanks to the generous number of checkpoints. Even better, unlike in the PC original, wherein you could rotate only in 90-degree increments, the WiiWare version allows you to tilt freely, making navigation much easier. While And Yet It Moves isn't the longest game (you can get through the Journey mode in an afternoon if you don't get stumped by some of the more-difficult later puzzles), the other modes will keep you playing.

Recommended

WiiWARE



ART STYLE: LIGHT TRAX

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** GENRE: **RACING** Wii POINTS: **600**

In this stylish, minimalistic racing game, you control a beam of light along a track that is composed of nothing but a stark black background bordered by thin walls. That aesthetic gives the game the feel of an old vector arcade game, but the track's frequent turns into the third dimension provide some visual flair. The unconventional control scheme (your beam travels at a constant speed; you only control its position and provide an occasional boost) seems limiting at first, but you soon realize that there's a lot of strategy hidden in the simple mechanics. It's surprisingly challenging as well. Victory requires precise control and well-timed boosts. The low price makes this experimental game even more inviting. —PHIL T.

Recommended

WiiWARE

BEJEWELED 2

PUBLISHER: **POPCAP GAMES**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

After making its way to pretty much every other platform since its 2004 debut, ultrapopular match-three puzzler Bejeweled 2 finally makes its way to WiiWare. Was it worth the wait? Well, other than pointer controls, nothing has changed; the game includes the same four modes as the other versions. The core mechanics are as good as ever, but it's hard to recommend this title to anyone other than those who have never played Bejeweled 2 before. —JUSTIN C.

Hmmm...

WiiWARE

BEN 10 ALIEN FORCE: THE RISE OF HEX

PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
GENRE: **ACTION**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Ben 10's premise is pretty promising. A teenage hero who's capable of morphing into a host of bizarre aliens, each with different powers, could make for a fantastic platformer. Imagine using the varying skills to work your way through puzzle-filled levels. Unfortunately, The Rise of Hex is riddled with poor control, dull level design, boring combat, ugly graphics, bad animation, and horrible, repetitive music. What a shame. —PHIL T.

Grumble Grumble

WiiWARE

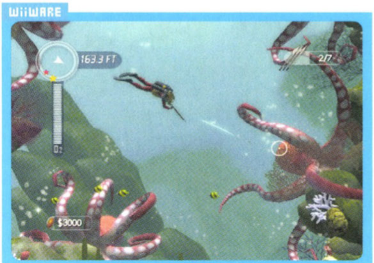
BLOOD BEACH

PUBLISHER: **CORESOFT**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Coresoft took its mediocre iPhone game Blood Beach, ported it to Wii, then more than tripled its price to $10. For that whopping cost (by WiiWare standards), you get to sit in a turret. Players control said turret (switching between a small variety of weapons) as wave after wave of Japanese attackers beset them. The basic premise; one-dimensional, highly repetitive gameplay; and rudimentary graphics aren't quite good enough for a WiiWare game at this price. —PATRICK C.

Grumble Grumble

WiiWARE



DIVE: THE MEDES ISLANDS SECRET

PUBLISHER: **COSMONAUT GAMES** GENRE: **ADVENTURE** Wii POINTS: **TBD**

Dive's methodical pacing and lack of traditional enemies (foes include moray eels, jellyfish, and the occasional shark) will turn away some gamers, but those looking for a different kind of 2-D action-adventure will find a lot to enjoy. The game is absolutely gorgeous—the lighting effects are very impressive for WiiWare—and the music is appropriately soothing or mysterious depending on the locale, while the physics and sound effects do a convincing job of making you feel like you're deep below the sea. At times I wanted more level variety, but character upgrades and lots of collectibles kept me engaged. I do wish the game had more of a climax, however. —CHRIS H.

Recommended

WiiWARE

CHESS CHALLENGE!

PUBLISHER: **DIGITAL LEISURE**
GENRE: **BOARD GAME**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Chess Challenge! for WiiWare is impaired by a fixation on time that also plagues its DSiWare counterpart. Fortunately, this version offers substantially greater value; the graphics are much improved (though the 3-D option offers poor perspective), hints are provided to assist novice players, and beefy multiplayer options (including online play) ensure easy alternatives to computer opponents. Not all is well, though; the WiiWare version inexplicably has no Undo option. —PATRICK C.

Hmmm...

WiiWARE

MANIC MONKEY MAYHEM

PUBLISHER: **THE CODE MONKEYS**
GENRE: **ACTION**
Wii POINTS: **800**

In Manic Monkey Mayhem, players control one of several monkeys stranded on a series of platforms. Generally, everyone throws bananas to knock opposing primates from their perches. Unfortunately, slick graphics and a clever premise can't defeat frustrating, imprecise controls and one very misguided design choice: the camera shows only one-third of the arena, necessitating far too much frantic camera-sweeping to dodge incoming bananas. —PATRICK C.

Hmmm...

WiiWARE

Godot
Savor it...

PHOENIX WRIGHT: ACE ATTORNEY TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM** GENRE: **ADVENTURE** Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Essentially a direct port of the third DS Ace Attorney title, Trials and Tribulations is another excellent point-and-click text-driven adventure featuring great characters, compelling stories, and a winning gameplay formula that you won't find in any other series. Admittedly, this is the weakest of the Phoenix Wright trilogy—it doesn't have the total freshness of the first game, nor does it offer any exciting new gameplay elements like the second installment—but that shouldn't stop you from checking out these lighthearted legal proceedings. —CHRIS H.

Recommended

WiiWARE

0 / 19
Wave: 9/10
Threat eliminated!
526
615

ROBOCALYPSE: BEAVER DEFENSE

PUBLISHER: **VOGSTER** GENRE: **STRATEGY** Wii POINTS: **600**

Sharp humor and a lighthearted art style are the highlights of an otherwise-average tower-defense title. When a mutant beaver calls on killer robots to exact revenge on human polluters, you are charged with protecting key locations. You can place and upgrade towers, and guide and upgrade your hero robot, but the other mechanoids on your side are operated automatically. It simplifies play, but also takes away a huge opportunity for strategy. Instead of having the option to build a fleet of medic robots to keep your towers in good shape, for example, you are forced to just keep building new towers when the old ones collapse. It's good, but not great. —GEORGE S.

Hmmm...

WiiWARE

VIRAL SURVIVAL

PUBLISHER: **NIS AMERICA**
GENRE: **ACTION**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Cheery art and upbeat music set the manic tone for NIS America's WiiWare debut, which has you steer a DNA molecule in a virus-riddled pool. In Normal mode you collect more DNA to make a strand; the longer the strand, the trickier it is to avoid baddies. Four other modes feature classic play styles (such as a shooter session). If you're online, you're given a world ranking. Though it's not incredibly deep, the game is pure entertainment from start to finish. —GEORGE S.

Recommended

WiiWARE

VOODOO DICE

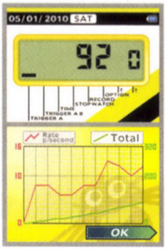
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Voodoo Dice joins the ever-swelling ranks of "block rolling" puzzle games. In this take on the subgenre, players roll a die around a grid-based board, striving to arrive at the prescribed destination tile. Various impediments, special tiles, pickups, and tools keep the effort complicated, of course. While the game has an undeniable air of quality (the graphics and music are quite slick), the action grows less engaging with each passing level, making the price hard to swallow. —PATRICK C.

Hmmm...

THE WRIGHT KIND OF DLC

Can't get enough Phoenix Wright? Then be sure to download the recently released extra case for the first Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney for WiiWare. Titled Rise from the Ashes, the lengthy episode (which was also included in the game's DS edition) is definitely worth the extra 100 Wii Points—it delivers new gameplay elements (such as the ability to manipulate evidence in 3-D) and new characters (such as forensics nut Ema Skye) that are revisited in later Ace Attorney games.

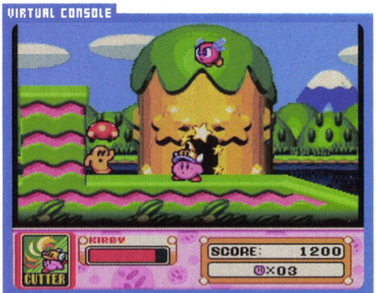


STRAIGHT SHOOTER

Hudson's 16-Shot! Shooting Watch for DSiWare is the definition of a button-masher. It's not exactly a game; it's simply a challenge in which you pound the buttons as fast as possible in the hopes of matching Hudson employee Takahashi Meijin's famed 16-shots-per-second record. There are a few different modes, but there's no online leaderboard for comparing scores. The app should be out now for 200 Nintendo DSi Points; only the most hardcore need apply.

EVALUATION STATION

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



KIRBY SUPER STAR

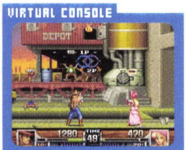
PLATFORM: **SUPER NES** PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER** ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1996**

Justin C's Pick

Kirby Super Star is probably my favorite Kirby title, and I'm thrilled that it's finally available on Virtual Console. With mostly solid controls, colorful 16-bit graphics, cooperative play, and plentiful variety, Kirby Super Star is a fantastic overall package. And even if you've played through the handheld remake, Kirby Super Star Ultra, I still think it's worth giving the original Super NES game a go. (I personally prefer this non-Ultra version, but that could be the nostalgia talking.)

Recommended

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



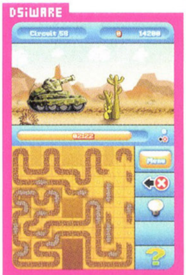
WILD GUNS

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES**
PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1994**

I never played Wild Guns back in the day, but I was always intrigued by its Wild West-meets-sci-fi motif. Now that I'm finally able to give it a shot, I've discovered that this shooter is definitely worth your while. Action-game-style character movement and destructible environments add interest to the intense shooting gallery-style action, and the game is a blast in co-op mode. It's fairly short, but challenging nonetheless. —CHRIS H.

Recommended

DSiWARE



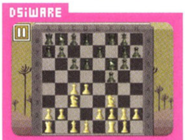
ADVANCED CIRCUITS

PUBLISHER: **BIP MEDIA**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Your task in Advanced Circuits is to complete a path by manipulating pieces on a grid. Stylus control is smooth, but puzzle solving is nonintuitive for sub-geniuses. A tip function nudges you in the right direction, but also takes time off the clock. That's harsh. —GEORGE S.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



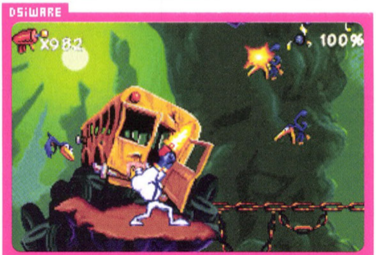
CHESS CHALLENGE!

PUBLISHER: **DIGITAL LEISURE**
GENRE: **BOARD GAME**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

A bare-bones affair, Chess Challenge! provides little more than the core chess experience. Unfortunately, that core experience is hampered by critical shortcomings. Although the amateur graphics are forgivable, the game's fixation on time is not; ranked matches require a time limit and computer opponents spend far too much time "thinking." The ticking clock and long waits will appeal only to the hardcore and patient. —PATRICK C.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



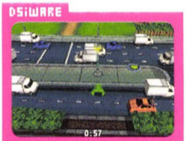
EARTHWORM JIM

PUBLISHER: **GAMELOFT** GENRE: **PLATFORMER** NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

When Earthworm Jim was first released on the Super NES and Genesis back in 1994, gamers were won over by its fantastic graphics, cartoony animation, and bizarre sense of humor. Time hasn't been especially kind to Jim, though, and the game's sprawling and occasionally unfocused levels and frequently cheap enemy placement are far more noticeable these days. The zoomed-in camera—a necessity given the DSi hardware—forces the player to make leaps of faith. Too often you'll land in a pit of spikes or on top of an enemy. A camera-based minigame has been added, allowing the player to earn weapon power-ups, but it adds little to the experience. Even though this earthworm is showing his age, the low price makes this port good for a cheap laugh or two. —PHIL T.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



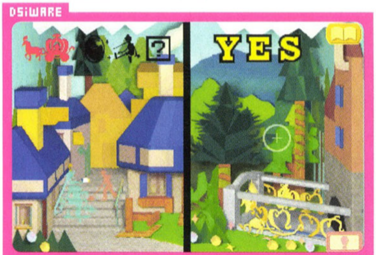
FROGGER RETURNS

PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
GENRE: **ACTION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Virtually identical to the WiiWare game released a few months ago, Frogger Returns successfully brings Konami's hopping hero back into leaping-and-dodging gameplay territory. A lower angle than in classic Frogger makes the environment more attractive but creates a slight problem in judging distance. Four levels go beyond the familiar street and swamp, offering more-complex paths to the goal. The touch screen is underutilized, but it's not really needed. —GEORGE S.

Recommended

DSiWARE



LOOKSLEY'S LINE UP

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** GENRE: **PUZZLE** NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Looksley's Line Up is a unique game with a nifty concept that just doesn't live up to its promise. In theory, you're able to move your head or tilt the Nintendo DSi system to view 3-D stages from different angles and cause the elements to line up to form 2-D letters and shapes. In practice, however, it doesn't work very well. Yes, you are able to change your view by moving around (very cool), but the mechanic doesn't come close to offering the precision you need to consistently match up the visual elements (not cool). The right kind of playing environment is supposed to fix this problem, but nowhere in the entire Nintendo Power office building allowed the game to function properly. As a result, the game delivered frustration that far outweighed the fun. —CHRIS H.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE

HERO OF SPARTA

PUBLISHER: **GAMELOFT**
GENRE: **ACTION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

Gameloft's well-regarded God of War clone for the iPhone makes its way to the Nintendo DSi. Players control King Argos as he hacks his way through a host of mythological foes while leveling up multiple weapons, chaining combos, solving basic puzzles, and ascending oversized bosses. You'll probably find yourself wishing for an analog stick and a higher-resolution screen (to better make out crowds of bad guys), but the action is nevertheless compelling. —**PATRICK C.**

Recommended

DSiWARE

METAL TORRENT

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** GENRE: **SHOOTER** NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Metal Torrent is a vertical shooter of the bullet-hell variety; we're talking gobs of projectiles. After selecting Easy or Insane ship configurations (there's nothing in between), players navigate a morass of bullets as they destroy enemy ships (and bullets) in the service of high scores. And high scores are what it's all about, as the game is comically short (about 15 minutes). The action is less about surviving (or taking in eye candy) than it is about strategically chaining kills to accelerate your point accumulation. If this concept floats your boat, you'll love the robust scoring system; anyone opting in will be ranked on Internet leaderboards, and you can view replays of the current top 10 playthroughs. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE

REAL CRIMES: JACK THE RIPPER

PUBLISHER: **VIRTUAL PLAYGROUND**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

Even though this looks like some sort of mystery/detective adventure, it's actually a hidden-picture game; the dialogue sequences between stages have precious little to do with your task at hand. The hidden objects range from glaringly obvious to surprisingly tricky, but sometimes the game can be too picky. Which of the three plates onscreen, for instance, does the game consider "a platter"? The price is also a tad steep. —**PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE

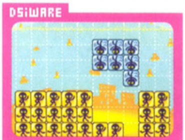
TELEGRAPH SUDOKU & KAKURO

PUBLISHER: **SANUK GAMES**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Four types of sudoku puzzles and sudoku's crossword-inspired cousin, kakuro, are well executed in this collection of 500 exercises. The tap-based interface is simple and intuitive. An optional autocorrect feature deletes wrong answers but comes with a time penalty. A tip feature nudges you in the right direction, but also penalizes you. If you crave number puzzles, though, purchasing this title is a no-brainer. —**GEORGE S.**

Recommended

DSiWARE



A TOPSY TURVY LIFE: TURVY DROPS

PUBLISHER: **TECMO KOEI**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Turvy Drops is a Tetris-style game in which the player draws the falling blocks to clear lines. It's a pretty clever idea. Not nearly as clever is the gimmick of holding the system upside down to play—it's an awkward configuration. Get past that, though, and you'll enjoy this twist on an old formula. Still, the bare-bones presentation, repetitive music, and lack of modes (Endless mode and a bland Puzzle mode) reveal why this is budget priced. —**PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE

A TOPSY TURVY LIFE: THE TURVYS STRIKE BACK

PUBLISHER: **TECMO KOEI**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

The "hold the system upside down" gimmick works better here than in Turvy Drops. The Turvys Strike Back puts a fun spin on the old shooter formula by having you play as the evil aliens. Using the stylus to dive-bomb the good guys works well, but tapping the screen to fire your lasers is clunky and unresponsive. The gameplay also grows repetitive quickly, even with a clever two-player mode. —**PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE

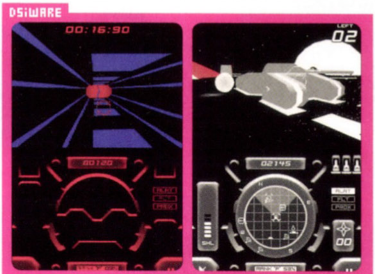
WORLD POKER TOUR TEXAS HOLD 'EM

PUBLISHER: **HANDS-ON MOBILE**
GENRE: **CARD GAME**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Most poker video games fail by reproducing the mechanics of poker while ignoring the experience. Fortunately, that isn't the case here; players create custom avatars then play the game in context—sitting at a table with other avatars. Slick presentation (complete with voice samples), an air of fairness (no shady dealing), and an excellent interface unite to evoke high-end sheen. Too bad you can't save in-progress games. —**PATRICK C.**

Recommended

DSiWARE



X-SCAPE

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** GENRE: **SHOOTER** NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

X-Scape has an interesting heritage. It's a followup to an obscure, Japan-only 1992 Game Boy release called X. Q-Games, the developer of X-Scape, was founded by X's designer, so this really is a true sequel. The tank-based gameplay feels like an updated version of the old arcade hit Battlezone, but with significantly more to do. In addition to the standard driving and shooting, you can get airborne by launching off ramps. Between stages, there are tunnels that must be successfully navigated within a strict time limit. This variety adds a lot of depth to the game. The great soundtrack and slick, *Tron*-inspired visuals add to the experience and help make up for the somewhat finicky controls. —**PHIL T.**

Recommended

PREVIEWS

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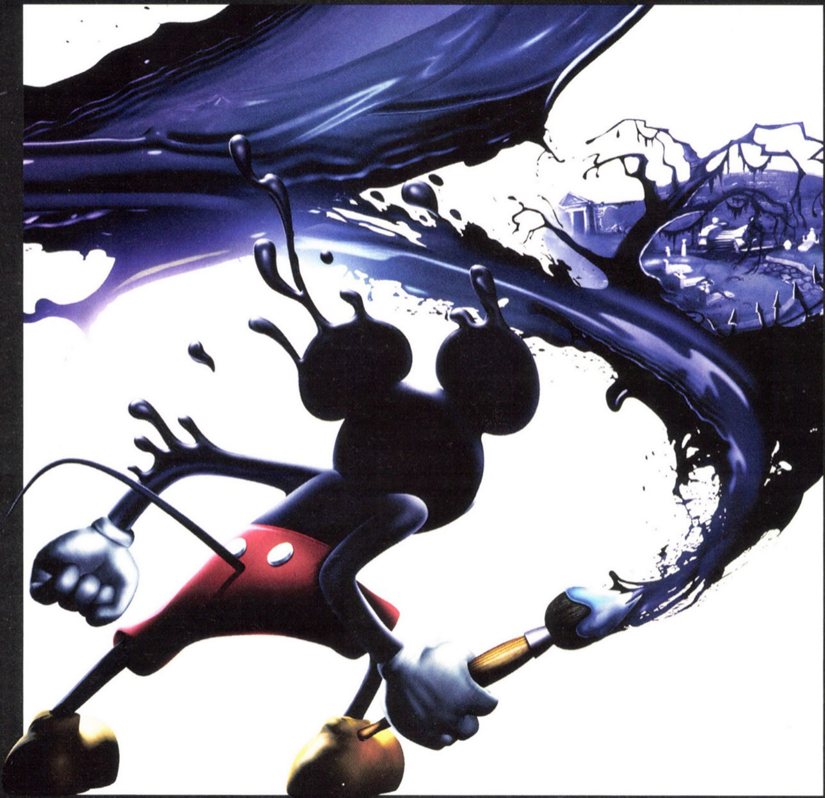
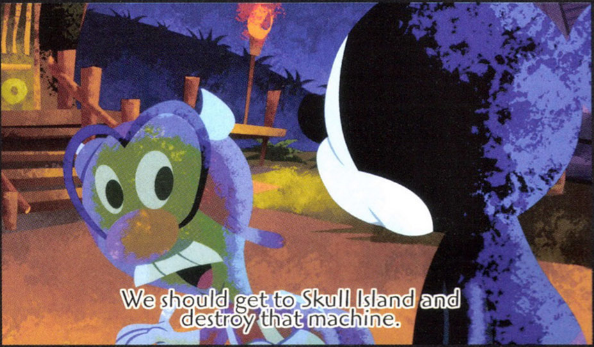


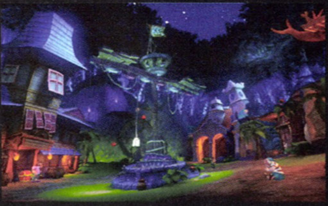
EPIC MICKEY

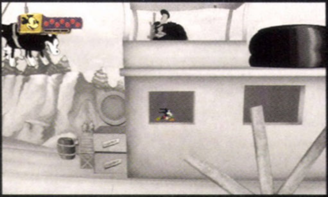
The Magic Kingdom gets a new coat of paint.

SINCE IT WAS first unveiled last fall, Epic Mickey has been among our most eagerly anticipated games for the Wii console. We were starting to worry as the project went into hiding these past few months, but Disney has finally pulled back the curtain and given us an opportunity to try the game for ourselves. We aren't too worried anymore.

To recap, Epic Mickey is the latest project from legendary designer Warren Spector and his team at Junction Point. The core play mechanics revolve around a magical brush, which Mickey can use to apply paint or paint thinner to almost any object in the game's cartoon world. You aim at your target via the Wii Remote controller then tap the B Button







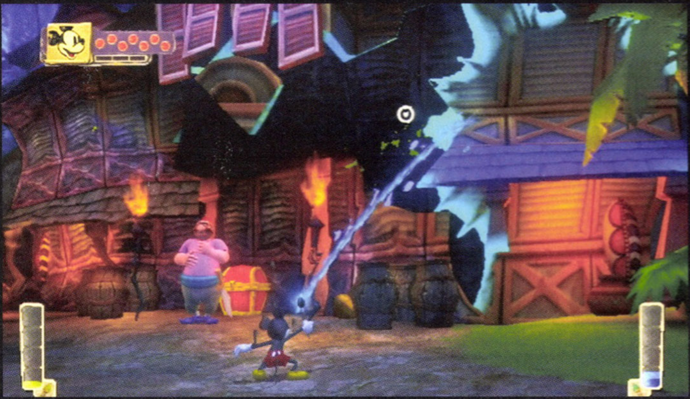
[Right] If that doesn't put a grin on your face, you should probably go see a doctor because you have no heart!

for a splash of paint or the Z Button for thinner (holding down either button fires a steady stream of the corresponding substance). Junction Point describes the game as an amalgamation of platforming, role-playing, and action-adventure, complemented by Spector's trademark approach of giving players meaningful choices that help shape the experience.

Our demo started with the game's hub, Ventureland, where Mickey can chat with his fellow 'toons and take on various side quests. He can be either helpful or mischievous, and his behavior will affect how other characters view him. From there you'll also access the areas that comprise the main journey, but in order to reach your destination you must first complete a brief 2-D platforming segment based on a classic Disney short. The example we saw paid homage to *Steamboat Willie*, complete with black-and-white visuals and a couple of seriously distraught heifers.

Afterwards we arrived at Skull Island from the film *Peter Pan*, where we were tasked with commandeering a ship from Mr. Smee (to what end, we're not quite sure). Anchors were holding the vessel in place, so we had to deal with those before we could accomplish our goal. The key, ultimately, was to use paint thinner to erase the anchors, but that proved easier said than done. Among the obstacles in our path were killer teacups armed with spinning blades, a prime example of the fact that Epic Mickey takes inspiration from every facet of Disney lore—from the company's films to its theme parks. We also encountered a number of guards, whom we could delete by spraying with thinner or befriend by giving them a new paint job. One of the sentinels was camped next to an anchor, however, and if we got too close, he would quickly lower a gate to deny us access. Fortunately, there are special pickups scattered throughout the level, and if you toss one of them near the guard, a TV will pop up and distract him with a cartoon. Once all of the anchors were aweigh, we hopped aboard the ship, painted in the missing steering wheel, and bid Mickey a reluctant farewell for the time being.

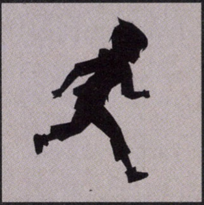
Though our demo lasted only about 15 minutes, it was dripping with clever ideas and plenty of Disney magic. If that's any indication of what's to come, we could have something pretty special on our hands. In the meantime, be sure to check out this month's Power Profiles with Warren Spector on page 78. —STEVE T.



PUBLISHER: **DISNEY INTERACTIVE**
Wii **DEVELOPER:** **JUNCTION POINT**
RELEASE: **HOLIDAY 2010**

LOST IN SHADOW

What lurks in the shadows? You do.



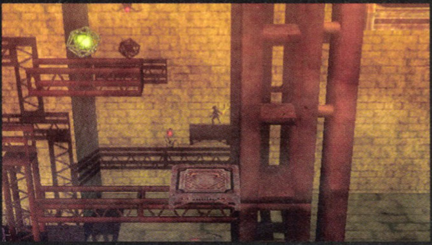
LOST IN SHADOW begins with a cinematic sequence in which a boy is chained up at the top of a tower. A robed figure approaches the helpless boy, weapon in hand. He slashes at the boy, but doesn't injure him physically; instead, the attack separates the boy from his shadow. The shadow is cast aside and thrown off the tower, plummeting to the ground below. This is where you come in. Controlling the severed shadow, it's up to you to make your way back up to the top of the tower and figure out just what the heck is going on.

As you may have read in our previous coverage of the game, Lost in Shadow is a different kind of platformer. As a shadow, you interact only with other shadows. A 3-D wall or fence or machine is merely scenery for you to pass over, but the 2-D shadow it casts could be a platform or an obstacle—or both, depending on where the light is coming from and how the shadow is cast.

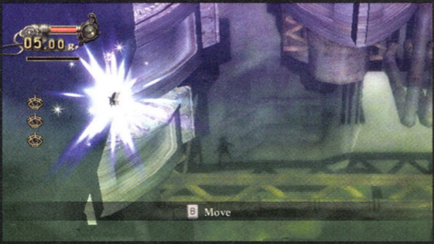
As you proceed through the game's 11 chapters, each with multiple stages, you'll visit various parts of the massive tower, including a garden, a factory, and a reservoir, and face shadowy versions of traditional platforming obstacles—including propellers, saw blades, and collapsing platforms—and use your sword to fight off shadow creatures that resemble spiders and bugs. But you'll also have to overcome challenging puzzles, such as moving a light source to rearrange the environment, manipulating objects to defeat otherwise-invincible foes, or using your fairylike companion to move physical objects and thus affect their shadows. In addition, the levels aren't linear; you'll have to explore and collect three keys in each stage to move on to the next.

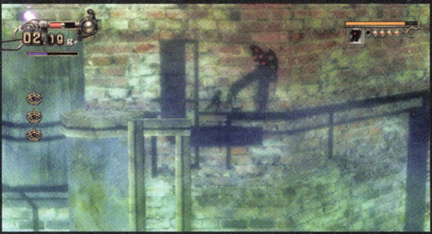
The game's somber atmosphere creates a uniquely tense experience, but no part is more unsettling than when we were pursued by a giant amalgamation of shadows, its numerous appendages reaching out to grab us as we fled. By hitting certain cages we released light that temporarily stunned the creature, but there was no way to defeat it—we could only run. The final showdown against the beast will have to wait until the game is released this fall. —**CHRIS H.**

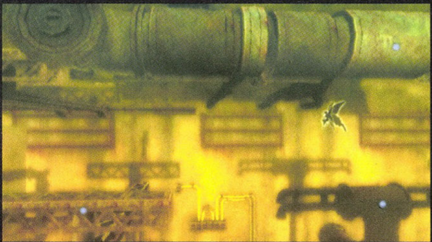
Wii **PUBLISHER: HUDSON**
DEVELOPER: HUDSON
RELEASE: FALL 2010



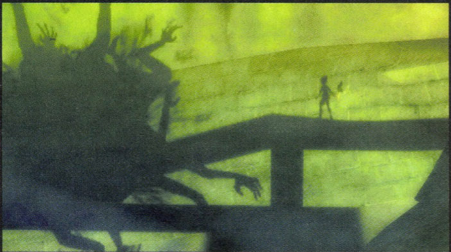
[Below] Your spangle companion helps solve the game's many puzzles.

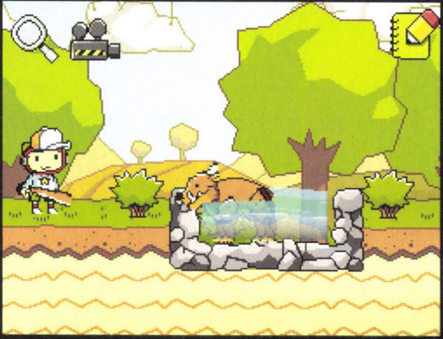


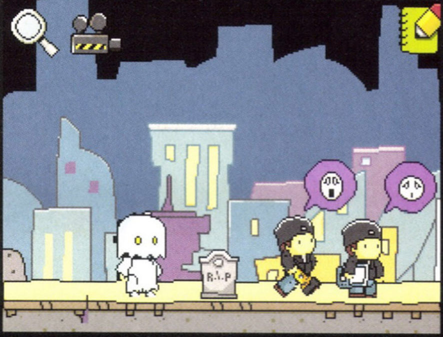




[Below] Even as a mere shadow, this boss creeps us out.



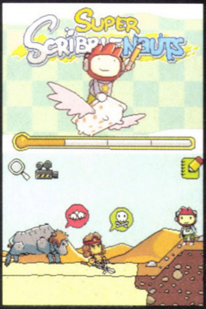




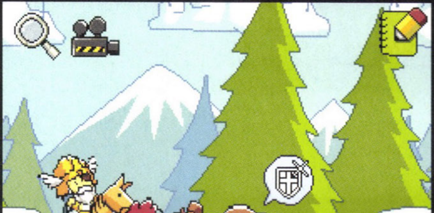
SUPER SCRIBBLENAUTS

Expanding your vocabulary has never been so much fun.

HOW DO YOU DEAL with a colossal, undead butterfly? By baiting it with explosive brains, of course! This and other such mind-blowing revelations await the creatively inclined in Super Scribblenauts, which takes the franchise's ambitious premise to even greater heights with the introduction of adjectives. Whereas the original Scribblenauts allowed players to create virtually any object by simply writing it on the touch screen, this appropriately titled follow-up also lets you modify those objects with more than 10,000 adjectives. So now you can summon a telekinetic aardvark, a surly battleship, or a polka-dotted, romantic, gangrenous beekeeper.



To take full advantage of these new possibilities, the levels in Super Scribblenauts are almost entirely puzzle-focused. (Those who played the first game may remember that it was divided evenly between action stages and puzzles stages, and would probably agree that the former just weren't as much fun as the latter.) One offering that we had the opportunity to sample for ourselves involved the midnight launch of a hot new video game. Hero Maxwell shows up late to find a huge line, and you're tasked with helping him reach the front by distracting the various kinds of customers. You can go with the obvious solutions—giving a letter to the mail carrier, for instance—but it's a lot more satisfying to see what kinds of crazy ideas you can come up with. Rather than handing the soldier a bazooka, you can make him just as happy (and less dangerous) with a militant rose. Plus, a revamped and more robust merit system rewards such imaginative thinking.



Our hands-on time also highlighted the sequel's vastly improved controls (which are cleverly introduced via a Mario-inspired tutorial stage). Previously, players guided Maxwell by tapping his destination and praying that he made it there without taking an unexplained detour and causing his own demise. Now you can move your hero directly using either the Control Pad or the stylus. That change goes a long way toward eliminating the frustration that plagued the first game. The physics are less wonky, as well, and the addition of adjectives means you can build an immovable bridge that doesn't collapse at the slightest nudge!

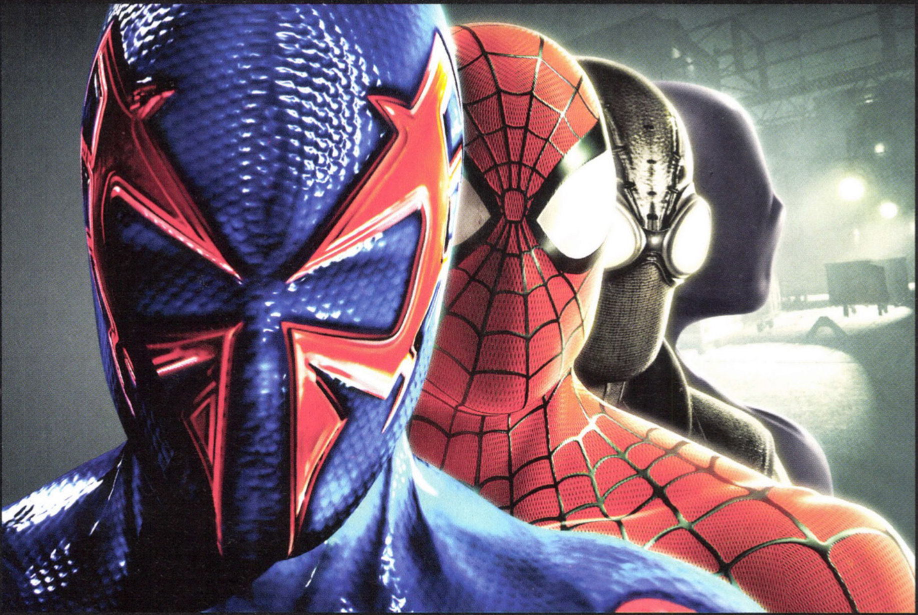
Rounding out the package is a deep new level editor that allows you to craft both action and puzzle stages. You'll set the parameters for puzzles through an assortment of scripting options similar to what the developers use. We expect our readers to come up with some brilliant (and bizarre) challenges when Super Scribblenauts launches this fall. —STEVE T.

PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE

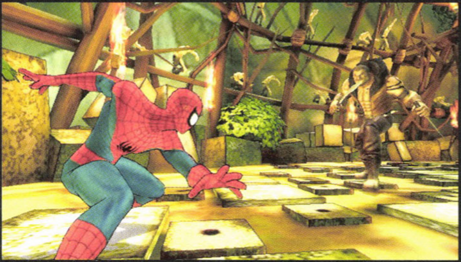
DS

DEVELOPER: 5TH CELL

RELEASE: FALL 2010



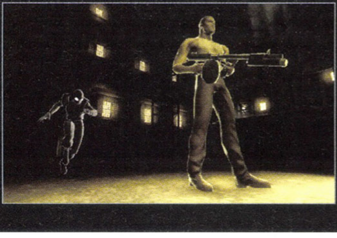
SPIDER-MAN: SHATTERED DIMENSIONS

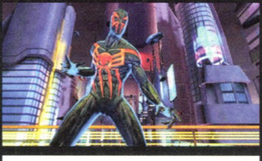


The web-slinger forms his own fantastic four.

ALL GREAT LEGENDS throughout history have been subject to different interpretations. As the closest thing we have to a modern-day legend, Spider-Man is no exception. Though casual fans may be acquainted with only the original telling of his tale—awkward teen Peter Parker gets bitten by a radioactive spider and becomes a superhero—over the years Marvel has introduced a number of variations on its most iconic character. This September, Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions will bring together four of those incarnations, each with its own unique aesthetic and gameplay focus.

The first—dubbed Amazing Spider-Man—is the wise-cracking, red-and-blue wall-crawler we all know and love. His portions of the game combine a cel-shaded, comic-inspired look with quick, acrobatic combat. It's a fairly traditional take on the franchise, yet it differs from previous Spider-Man games by taking ol' webhead out of the city and into more unfamiliar territory. That includes a lush jungle, where we see Spidey face off against an unusually quick Kraven the Hunter. The

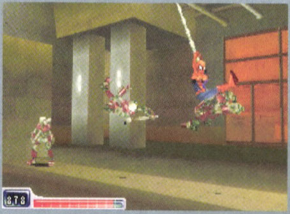


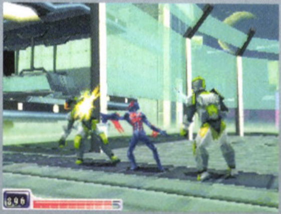


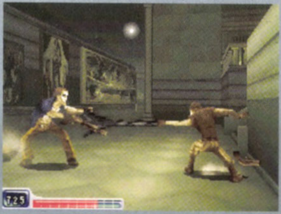
[Left] Spiders always seem to have a knack for appearing out of nowhere.

PORTABLE DIMENSIONS

A version of Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions is coming to the Nintendo DS system, as well, courtesy of developer Griptonite. The studio has experience bringing Marvel's superheroes to the dual-screened handheld, having previously worked on Spider-Man: Web of Shadows and Iron Man 2.







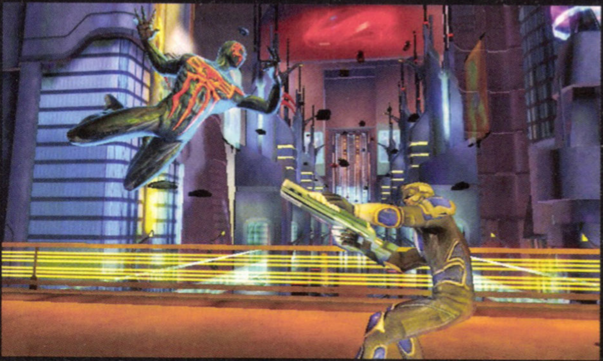
game's story (penned by Marvel veteran Dan Slott) revolves around pieces of a mystical tablet that have been scattered across the parallel dimensions, and it seems Kraven has stumbled across one of those fragments, granting him supernatural agility. Fortunately, our friendly neighborhood Spider-Man can use the destructible environments to even the score, latching onto stone pillars with his webs and bringing them crashing down on the mustachioed villain.

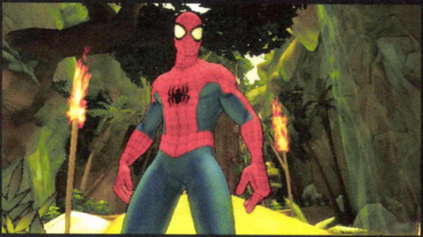
Noir Spider-Man is a lot more subdued and methodical, hiding in the shadows and sneaking up on his foes. Muted yellows and browns distinguish this Depression-era take on the series, which has a decidedly darker and more brutal tone. It also features stark lighting, a key component of the stealth gameplay. As our hero slinks along the rooftops of a sprawling carnival, for example, he has to keep an eye on a fireworks display that can illuminate and reveal him to the guards below. Norman Osborn figures prominently in the Noir segments as "the Goblin," a mob boss and circus freak.

A futuristic New York City and a slick, clean art style set the scene for Spider-Man 2099. This character's dimension emphasizes aerial action, with one thrilling sequence pitting our hero against airborne foes during a long free-fall between towering skyscrapers. The web-slinger of the future uses his trademark talons in battle and has the ability to temporarily slow his perception of time. For the first time ever, the Hobgoblin will make an appearance in the 2099 universe, though Activision teases that he's but a henchman for another, yet-to-be-revealed villain.

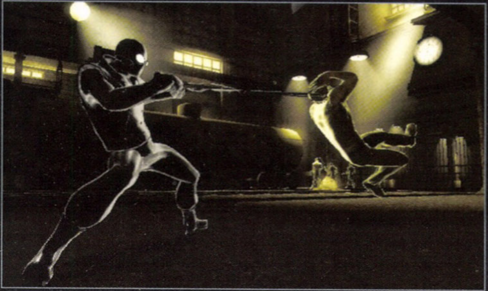
The company is keeping the fourth and final dimension under wraps for now, but this already looks like the most ambitious Spider-Man game in years. —STEVE T.

Wii
PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: BEENOX
RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 2010





[Above] Your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man. [Right] Your creepy, goggle-wearing vigilante Spider-Man.



TOM CLANCY'S H.A.W.X. 2

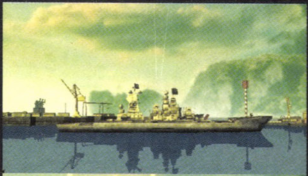
There's more than one way to fly the unfriendly skies.

IF YOU THINK Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2 is just another arcadey dogfighting adventure, think again. Yes, air combat is a big part of the experience, but there's also a story that draws you into this near-future world. Set between the events of the original H.A.W.X. and H.A.W.X. 2 released for PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360, this Wii title's storyline was cowritten by Flint Dille, who has scribed numerous video games (including Wheelman and Transformers: The Game) and features the vocal talents of actors Ron Perlman (*Sons of Anarchy, Hellboy*) and David Zayas (*Dexter, The Expendables*). The developers wanted to ensure that the characters, both good and bad, are memorable. Of course, the actual flying has to be memorable, too; fortunately, it seems to be so far, thanks to the inclusion of a wide variety of gameplay elements. Here's a sample of what you can expect. **—JUSTIN C.**

Wii
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT ROMANIA**
RELEASE: **AUGUST 2010**

Eye on the Prize

Remember: you're not always out to destroy everything you see. One mission we played has you flying to different harbors searching for battleships. Not every harbor has enemy craft in it, however; you must confirm that the targets are there before giving the green light for your allies to begin their bombardment. If you sic them on the wrong target—which can happen if you just say "yes" when the confirmation prompt appears—you'll have to wait while your bombers rearm before you can call them again.



[Above] Make the correct call, and your enemies will disappear in a flash.

Fire in the Sky

Perhaps the most standard type of air combat (but far from boring) has you taking to the skies and engaging enemy tangos, Ace Combat-style. However, the developers didn't want you to just be chasing after onscreen icons; they focused instead on more-close-up encounters, making the experience feel more intense. Additionally, a second player can get in on the action by using his own Wii Remote to shoot baddies. (In fact, a second player can join in at virtually any time.)

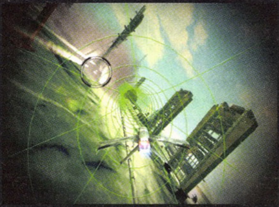
Death from Above

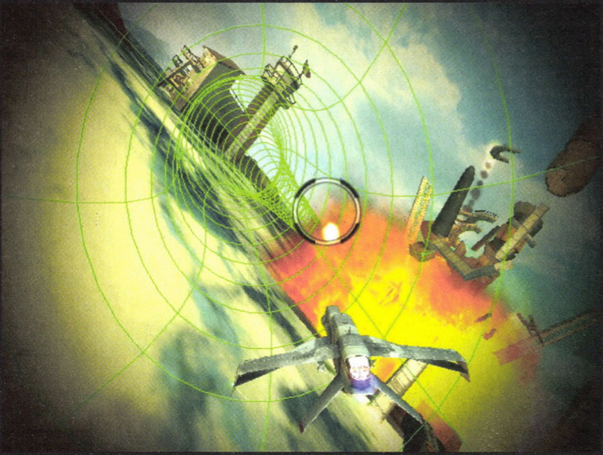
Occasionally you're tasked with hitting numerous ground targets, so you fly close to the ground in on-rails segments. The focus in these faster-paced Afterburner-esque levels is on hitting as many targets as you can while avoiding incoming hazards.

[Below] Maybe you're flying a little *too* low.

Drone On

As in real life, unmanned remote-controlled drones are used to gather intel. You fly these drones as you would any plane in this game, but you have specific goals to accomplish with the drones, such as locating hidden enemies. With a drone, you can lock on to, say, a computer and hack into it via a minigame wherein you rotate the Wii Remote to line up your cursor with the glowing section of an onscreen circle. Once it's been hacked successfully, you can follow a marked path to yet another computer waiting to be hacked.

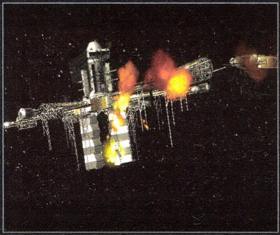




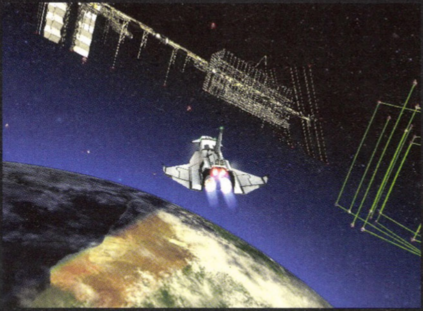
[Above] As you can see, flying the drone requires a bit more precision than flying the fighter planes.

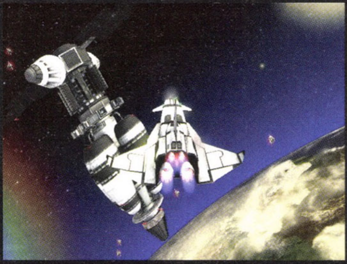
Space Ace

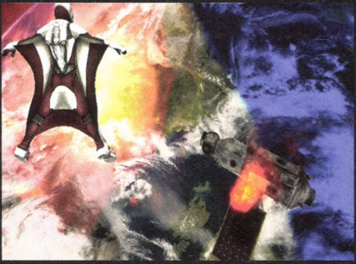
You aren't restricted to just the Earth's surface in H.A.W.X. 2. A couple of missions take place in outer space, such as when you fly a shuttle to a space station. Things don't go quite as planned when you arrive, though, and the space station explodes, leaving you without a ride back to Earth. But you're not entirely out of luck—thanks to your specially designed space suit, you can skydive back to terra firma, avoiding falling debris as you do so.



Um, we're not sure if that flying-squirrel-style suit is enough to protect you from the many dangers of atmospheric reentry....







Crazy Eight

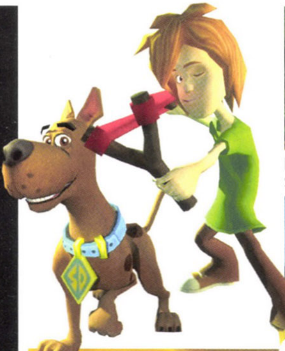
Clearly, H.A.W.X. 2 has plentiful gameplay types in the single-player—or two-player if you're playing cooperatively—game, but this title also offers some multiplayer action: top-down arcade-shooter play for up to eight people. The Wii console can support only four Wii Remotes at once, but the developers have a clever solution to this problem. One player uses the Wii Remote to control his ship while a second player uses the Nunchuk accessory to control another jet. It's a fairly simple experience, but it seems to work well enough. (Unfortunately, Ubisoft declined to provide screenshots of this mode.)

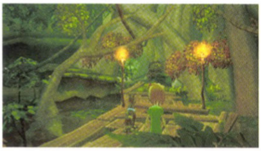
SCOOBY-DOO! AND THE SPOOKY SWAMP

Do the Doo!

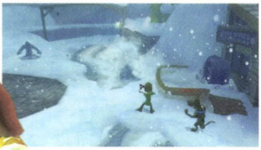
Following up on last year's Scooby-Doo! First Frights, Scooby-Doo! and the Spooky Swamp lets you take the timeless canine and his pals through another series of action-packed mysteries. Like in its predecessor, the character designs are oddly childlike, while the gameplay is inspired by LEGO Star Wars; you can switch between the members of Mystery Inc. at any time to use their different abilities to bash baddies, solve puzzles, and collect endless trails of Scooby Snacks. Fred pushes crates, Daphne climbs poles, Velma operates machinery, Shaggy swings via grappling hook, and Scooby can enter doggy doors. (Scooby also swings sausage links like nunchuks, which is one of the strangest things we've ever seen.) This time the adventure begins in—you guessed it—a spooky swamp, where Scooby and Shaggy encounter an enigmatic voodoo woman who promises to make them the meal of a lifetime if they can recover the ingredients for her. That quest leads the gang to new locations and even more mysteries. —**CHRIS H.**

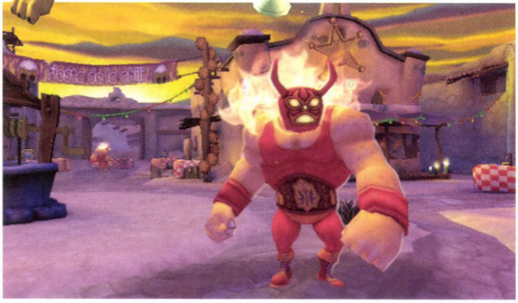
Wii DS **PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: TORUS GAMES
RELEASE: FALL 2010





[Below] Not even snow monsters will keep Scooby and Shaggy from their Scooby Snacks.



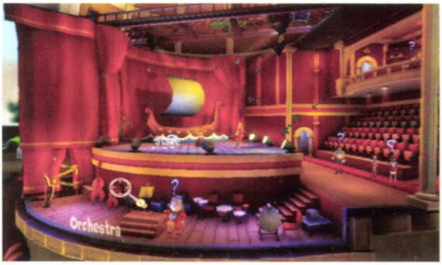


GUILTY PARTY

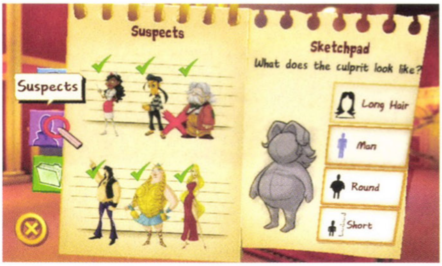
It's not a party until someone goes to jail.

Wii has been the go-to console for social gatherings in recent years, but a vast majority of the party games pumped out by cash-grabbing publishers sort of suck. Disney hopes to buck that trend with Guilty Party, an original mystery-themed effort that boasts a strong sense of humor and more personality than a dozen of its competitors combined. Developed by Wideload Games (responsible for the similarly humorous Stubbs the Zombie on Xbox), this whodunnit delivers Saturday-morning-cartoon charm as up to four players either cooperate or compete as members of the Dickens Detective Agency. The gumshoes take turns exploring a crime scene, tackling an assortment of minigames to gather clues, and interrogating suspects until someone has enough evidence to piece together the identity of the culprit. In addition to the plot-driven Story mode, there's a Party mode that randomly generates a limitless number of mysteries, mixing and matching locales, clues, suspects, and more to give Guilty Party board-game-like longevity. —**STEVE T.**

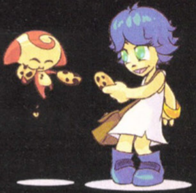
Wii **PUBLISHER: DISNEY INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: WIDELOAD GAMES
RELEASE: AUGUST 2010



[Below] If nothing else, that red dress should be illegal.



MONSTER TALE



Better not call him "Tamagotchi" to his face...

PROJECT MONSTER HAS a proper name now, and, more important, a way to reach the market this winter. Majesco has picked up this debut project from DreamRift (a team founded by the folks who bossed Henry Hatsworth for Electronic Arts), and it's this year's game to watch if you want a side-scroller with a difference.

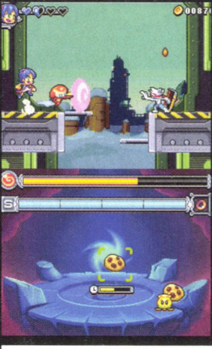
Monster Tale lands a blue-haired girl named Ellie in a Monster Kingdom gone bad. Five juvenile delinquents backed up by the muscle of towering pet monsters have each claimed a corner of the kingdom, and Ellie needs the help of a beast named Chomp to kick them all back into shape.

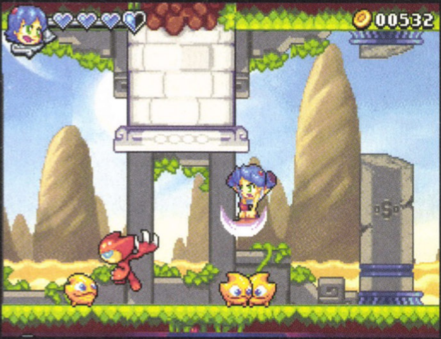
Think of Chomp as a bigger, meaner Chao from Sonic Adventure, or maybe a complex take on Nintendo's own Kirby. When you feed him various things (he'll eat almost anything, even dropped enemy weapons), he takes on different forms. Chomp's evolution takes a more practical direction than that of your average virtual pet, though. His more than 30 transformations give him new ways to smack the bad guys and help Ellie explore the game world.

Ellie evolves alongside Chomp. You can buy upgrades for her stats whenever you can afford them, plus snag unique skills after beating a boss monster. Knock off one boss, and she can wall-jump her way to new areas, Ninja Gaiden-style. Chomp can't carry all the weight—he bails for the bottom screen after taking too much damage—so Ellie has to be ready to survive on her own.

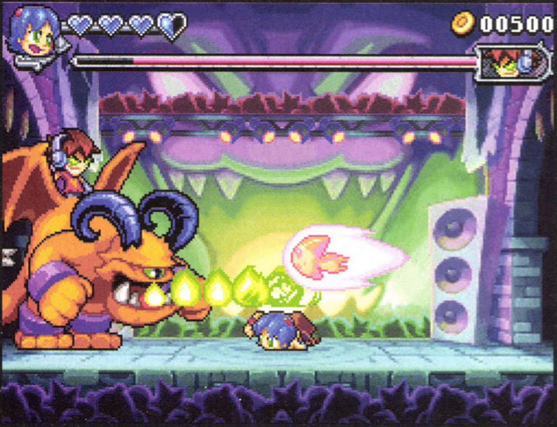
The Monster Kingdom breaks down into five general areas, from a haunted treehouse to a cruising monster train, but it's all one big world, more like Metroid than Mario. How you explore it depends on how Chomp evolves—learning one skill ahead of another might unlock a different area. That's just one wrinkle that makes this virtual-pet platformer one of 2010's most intriguing DS games. —**DAVID S.**

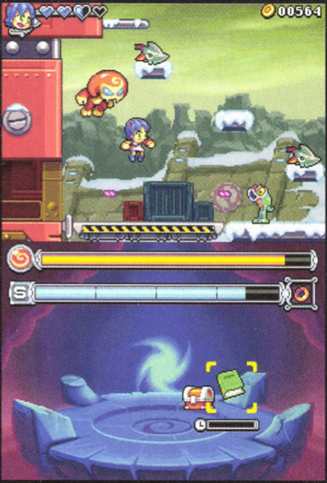
DS PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **DREAMRIFT**
RELEASE: **DECEMBER 2010**

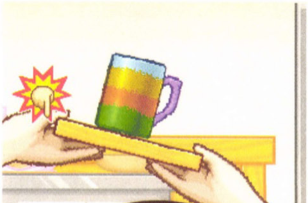


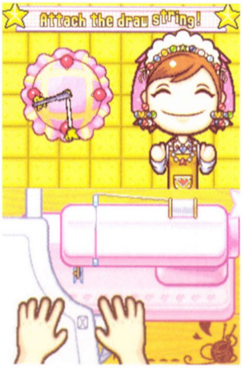


[Below] This is either one of the game's bosses or Gwar is touring the Monster Kingdom. Or both.

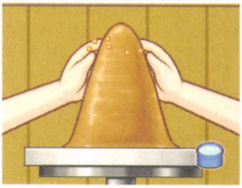







Attach the draw string!

From sewing to spinning clay, Mama's a master when it comes to arts and crafts.



CRAFTING MAMA

Is there anything Mama can't do?

Mama isn't just into cooking anymore. Nor is she content merely growing flowers in her garden. That's right—Mama has taken up a new pastime: arts and crafts. Building upon the winning formula of Mama's previous games, Crafting Mama allows players to create a variety of projects by playing a series of minigames that mimic real-life activities. After choosing your materials, colors, and patterns, you'll use the touch screen to cut, sew, fold, glue, paint, pin, mold, and more. There are 40 types of goods to create, from pottery, dolls, and earrings to birdhouses, patchwork quilts, and paper airplanes. As in previous Mama games, you'll be ranked according to how well you complete each minigame (with gold, silver, or bronze medals), and you can save memories of your crafting experiences in a scrapbook. Best of all, there's no mess to clean up afterward. —CHRIS H.

DS PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **COOKING MAMA LTD.**
RELEASE: **FALL 2010**

GALACTIC TAZ BALL

The "Taz" part is obvious, but the "ball" takes explaining.

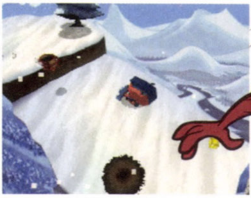
One of the DS touch screen's underrated abilities is the way it can mimic a different control device. The "ball" in Galactic Taz Ball isn't the kind you kick downfield—it's a virtual trackball controller, à la Marble Madness or Missile Command.

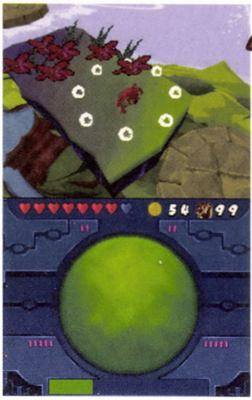
The game itself is actually a 2-D/3-D platformer. That seems like a weird fit for the control that a trackball offers, which tends to be quick and responsive, but not very precise. With this character, though, it makes sense. Taz isn't *supposed* to be easy to control.

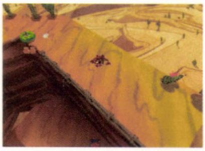
He's interesting to control, though, which can make up for a touch of aggravation. In the 3-D worlds, spinning the trackball sends a Taz tornado whirling around and mowing down armies of robots. Side-scrolling underworld levels, meanwhile, play like a one-man Lemmings, where you bounce Taz from one end of the stage to another by manipulating traps and machines in the background.

Neither mode is easy to master, but there's a solid tutorial to illustrate the basics, and Taz himself definitely contributes to the experience. He hisses, he spits, he spins the wrong way and falls off cliffs, but for some reason, it's hard not to like him. —DAVID S.

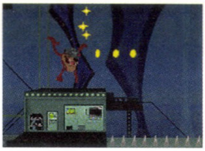
DS PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **WAYFORWARD** RELEASE: **FALL 2010**





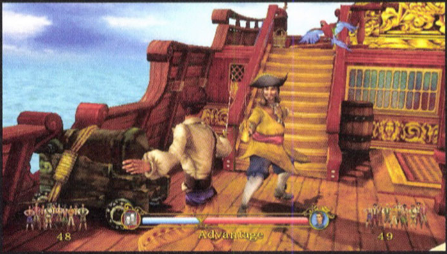


[Left] Spin the green trackball to make Taz go wild!



SID MEIER'S PIRATES!

Swashbuckling is always more fun with a matey.

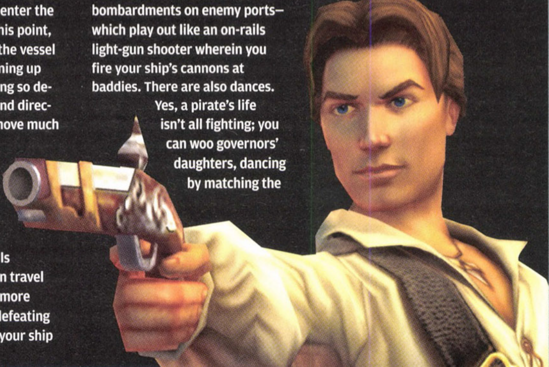


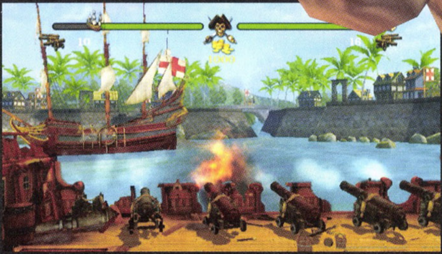
ORIGINALLY RELEASED IN 1987 for the Commodore 64 and then updated in 2004 for the PC (and subsequently ported to several platforms), Sid Meier's Pirates! has been around for a long time. Now the pirate sim is finally making its way to Wii with the same basic premise—you are a young buccaneer who assembles a fleet in order to get rich and uncover clues to the whereabouts of the villainous Marquis de la Montalban (against whom you seek revenge)—but also exciting new features.

The most significant changes come in the form of Wii Remote-centric minigames, almost all of which are playable with a buddy. Say you come upon a vessel ripe for plundering while you're cruising through the Caribbean. You get near it and tap A to enter the naval-battle mode. At this point, you can try to take out the vessel with your cannons by lining up your ship just right. Doing so depends heavily on the wind direction, though, as you'll move much more slowly when sailing into the wind. Fortunately, if you're playing with a friend, that player can rotate his own controller to line up the sails with the wind so you can travel faster. If you'd prefer a more hands-on approach to defeating your foes, you can ram your ship into your opponent's, initiating a swashbuckling minigame in which you swing the Wii Remote like a sword. Your pal can help here, too, assuming the role of a parrot that can hurt your adversary by performing quick-time events.

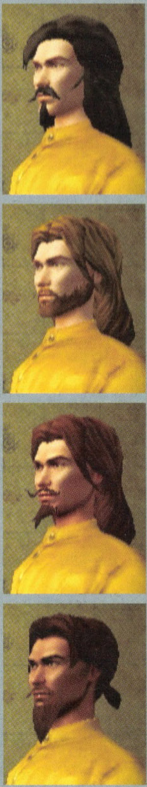
Outside of ship-to-ship combat, your matey can help you during bombardments on enemy ports—which play out like an on-rails light-gun shooter wherein you fire your ship's cannons at baddies. There are also dances. Yes, a pirate's life isn't all fighting; you can woo governors' daughters, dancing by matching the onscreen gestures while your friend plays a rhythm game with his remote. —**JUSTIN C.**

Wii
PUBLISHER: **2K GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **2K CHINA**
RELEASE: **FALL 2010**



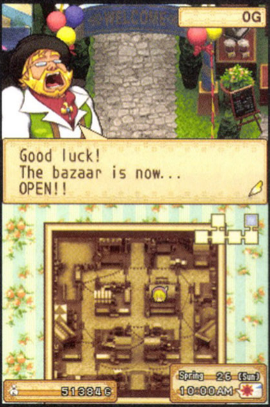


Nothing brings two people together like shooting things with cannons.



BUILD-A-BEARD WORKSHOP

Not only can you upgrade your ships in Sid Meier's Pirates! for Wii, but you can also improve the look of your character with an array of outfits and even facial hair. After all, if you're going to be a mighty pirate, you might as well look the part.



Good luck!
The bazaar is now...
OPEN!!

Stamina
Spring 18 (Sat)
1:13PM
51384G

[Left] The weekly bazaar is your chance to rake in the cash.

HARVEST MOON: GRAND BAZAAR

It's a seller's market.

HAVING ALL THE hopes of a dying town rest on your small shoulders sounds stressful, but the Harvest Moon games have always made it a lighthearted task. Like in previous entries in the series, your two main goals in Grand Bazaar are to create a successful farm and start a family. You begin with a little plot of land and a modest farmhouse, and build up your holdings over time by planting crops, raising animals, and improving your property. When you need a break from farm work, you can mosey into town and get to know the residents, who all need your help with their various personal problems.

As the title suggests, the biggest difference between Grand Bazaar and previous entries in the series is that Zephyr Town's residents depend on its weekly bazaar for income. However, lately the bazaar looks like a ghost town. It's up to you to open up a shop that will attract visitors and revive the local economy.

Your bazaar operation works like a fast-paced minigame; you ring a bell and customers approach your stand to buy items or to chat about the stand, and you must fill their orders correctly (hit the A Button three times if someone wants three of an item) and respond quickly to earn happy customers. At the end of each bazaar day, vendors are judged on both customer satisfaction and total profits, so having lots of quality goods to offer is key (meaning you can't neglect your farm despite your duties at the bazaar). You can sell anything you make, such as crops from your garden, products from your animals (like milk and wool), or even home-cooked meals you create in your kitchen using your own produce.

Grand Bazaar doesn't stray too far from the usual Harvest Moon formula, but we're looking forward to seeing how Zephyr Town eventually shapes up. **—CAROLYN G.**

DS PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
DEVELOPER: **MARVELOUS**
RELEASE: **JULY 2010**

Stamina
Spring 18 (Sat)
9:23AM
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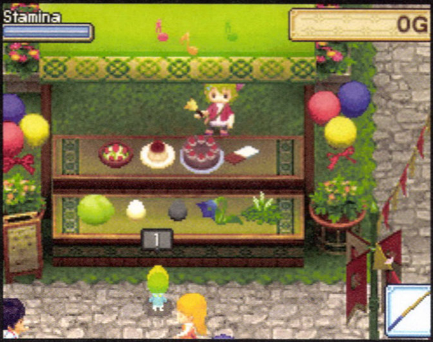


Cloud IX

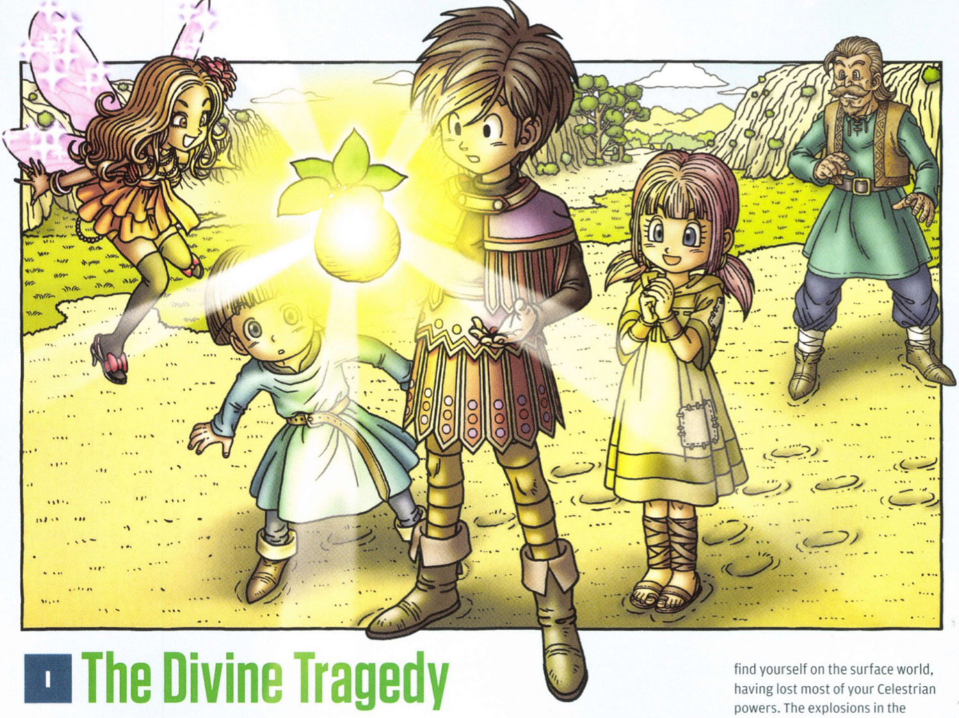
Fallen angels fight to save the mortal world in the game-changing Dragon Quest IX: Sentinels of the Starry Skies.

Just when it seemed that the Dragon Quest series couldn't get any hotter in Japan, Dragon Quest IX smashed expectations by selling a record-shattering four million copies in less than a year. The move to the wildly popular Nintendo DS system certainly didn't hurt, but it was the game's connectivity features that transformed Dragon Quest IX into a social phenomenon. Kids gathered in McDonalds restaurants to trade treasure maps and download McDonalds-exclusive content, and adults congregated at a Dragon Quest-themed bar in Tokyo to quest together while enjoying game-themed libations. Commuters passing through popular train stations with a Nintendo DS in their bag could easily end up "tagging" 30 or 40 other players.

But in the West, the Dragon Quest series has yet to score a breakout hit. Each new installment invariably inspires a bunch of articles—kind of like this one—wondering if the newest entry will have what it takes to win over American audiences. Invariably, the answer seems to be "no." Will this time be any different? We can think of IX good reasons why it might.

BY **CASEY LOE**

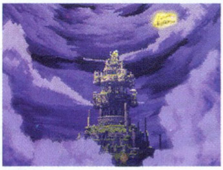
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **SQUARE ENIX/LEVEL 5** RELEASE: **JULY 2010** **DS**



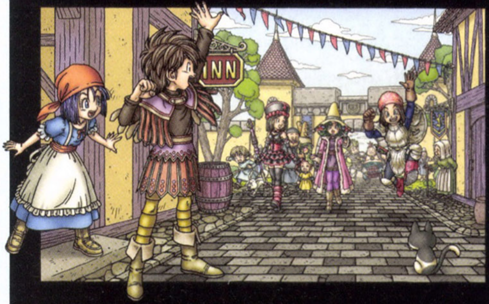
I The Divine Tragedy

Straying far from the usual small-town-boy-saves-the-world RPG scenario, Dragon Quest IX puts players in the role of a divine immortal known as a Celestrian. Invisible to normal folk, Celestrians watch over mortal communities and do good deeds in order to earn something called Benevolessence. In this game's strange mix of mythologies, that Benevolessence is the fertilizer that makes a heavenly World Tree grow, until the day it bears fruit and the path to the Almighty becomes clear. But when the prophesied day finally arrives, the hard-working Celestrians are greeted not with divine light and a heavenly chorus, but with explosions and chaos. Either the Almighty has turned out to be *Transformers* director Michael Bay, or something has gone horribly wrong.

When the smoke clears, you'll find yourself on the surface world, having lost most of your Celestrian powers. The explosions in the Celestrian realm have hit like a devastating earthquake, and the fallen fruits of the World Tree—the seven golden Fyggs—have found their way into mortal hands. The divine Fyggs provide incredible power that can corrupt fragile minds, and those who find them tend to leave tragedy in their wake. Only by recovering the Fyggs will you be able to regain your powers, return home, and solve the intriguing mystery of the Celestrians.



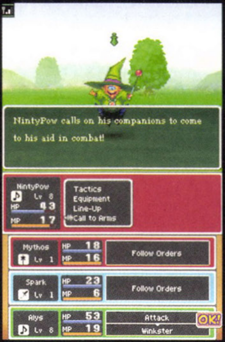
II The Fellowship of the Fygg



Of course, you can't be expected to do all that alone. You can recruit a handful of mortal allies from the game's central hotel, but if you don't like their style, you can make your own comrades from scratch. You control, equip, and level up these allies like you would characters in any other RPG. What's different in Dragon Quest IX is that at any time you can give your party the boot (temporarily) to adventure with your friends instead.

Each Game Card is treated as its own parallel world, so only the player who chooses to host a multiplayer game will be able to make any storyline progress. Other players will go to their world's version of the game's central hotel, where a Celestrian can create a portal between their world and the host's. Visiting players are free to act independently of their host, and can visit different areas and even battle different enemies from the rest of the group. But when players want to team up, the host can bring them together with a single command, even in the midst of battle.

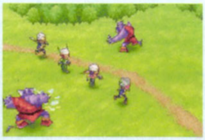
Since it's his world, only the host can accept quests, open red treasure chests, gain items from combat, and command NPC party members. Visitors can still acquire EXP, gold, and skill points, open blue treasure chests (which contain random items), and make progress toward certain side quests that they began in their game.

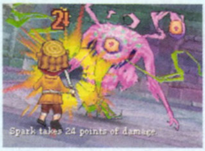


NintyPow calls on his companions to come to his aid in combat!

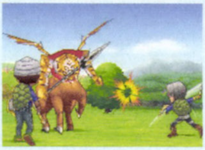
[Right] A Call to Arms will summon your companions to your side.

III Combat Evolved





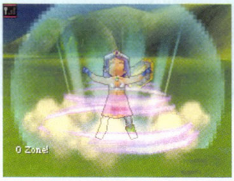
Spark takes 24 points of damage



Let's face it—no one likes random encounters. It's taken long enough, but the Dragon Quest series has finally joined every other modern RPG series in scrapping them entirely. Instead of being abruptly yanked into combat every few steps, you can now clearly see enemies on the world map, and you're free to chase them down or flee from their path. Not only is this infinitely more aesthetically pleasing than constantly stumbling into invisible foes, but it adds another layer of gameplay depth. Players who are hunting for specific items can zero in on the foes that hold them rather than having to trigger a bunch of tedious encounters in hopes of getting lucky. When visiting old areas, players needn't bother with meaningless, low-level encounters; weakling monsters will take one look at your hero and run for their lives.

The battles themselves look impressive, with wonderfully modeled enemies and smooth character animation. Unlike in previous games, in which your party and the enemy party stood in neat lines swinging at each other, characters now scatter throughout the battlefield, attacking from all directions for a more dramatic sense of conflict.

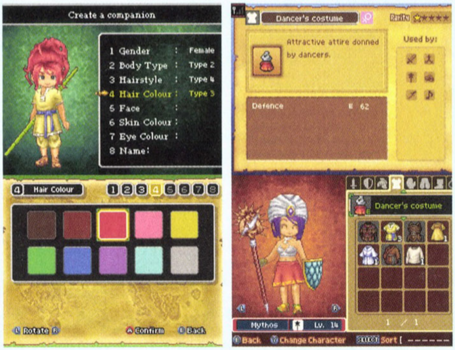
The actual battle mechanics haven't changed much; players still select basic commands, spells, and skills from a menu, and have as much time as they need to make a decision. There are a few new twists, though. Our favorite is the Coup de Grâce; a class-specific special move that characters can trigger only when they're taking a beating. Examples include powerful attacks, a party-wide healing effect, and the ability to cast spells for free. The Coup de Grâce can give even the lowest-level character in your party the opportunity to be the hero who turns a tough fight around.



0 Zone!

IV Dressing to the IXs

It was impressive when Dragon Quest VIII offered unique models for each weapon, but Dragon Quest IX takes a massive leap forward by giving a unique appearance to every armament in the game. There are hundreds upon hundreds of different weapons, shields, chest pieces, leggings, bracers, and shoes, and since the Dragon Quest series has always had a sense of humor when it came to equipment, there's plenty of variety to make playing dress-up fun. I don't know how a denim skirt could provide more protection than iron leggings, or how a spangled dress could be sturdier than a suit of brass armor, but it sure is nice that it works out that way. It won't be long before you're gladly sacrificing a few Defense points in order to better coordinate your characters' wardrobes—you wouldn't be caught dead wearing iron greaves over fishnet tights, would you?


Create a companion

1 Gender : Female
2 Body Type : Type 2
3 Hairstyle : Type 4
4 Hair Colour : Type 3
5 Face :
6 Skin Colour :
7 Eye Colour :
8 Name:

Dancer's costume

Attractive attire donned by dancers.

Defence 62

Mythos Lv. 14

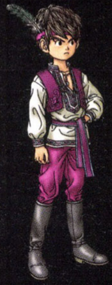
Elaborate hairstyles and a bustier top are a hardened soldier's best friend. Who knew?

V Vocation Destinations

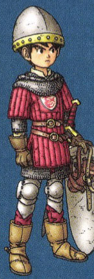
When you awaken in the mortal world, your flashy Celestrian clothes inspire a cover story that you're a traveling musician. And thus, Minstrel becomes the unusual default vocation for all player characters.

As the game progresses, you'll earn the ability to switch to a variety of other vocations. But changing jobs comes at a steep cost: you'll get to keep your Minstrel skills and equipment, but will otherwise be starting over as a Level-1 character in your new class. Starting over from Level 1 can be a setback when playing solo, but it's actually quite useful in multiplayer; when you're joining a friend's game to provide some help in a low-level area, you might as well use the opportunity to level up a new job instead of waltzing through the area and earning negligible amounts of EXP. Then you can return to your old vocation with the skills you learned on your journey.

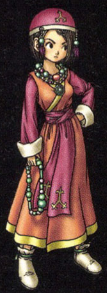
In addition to the six base vocations, there are six more you can unlock throughout the course of the game. But to do so, you'll first need to find a mentor and complete an optional quest.



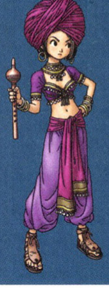
Minstrel
Minstrels are well-balanced characters that can dabble in both offensive and defensive magic, and wield exotic weapons like whips and fans. Their exclusive performance skills allow them to distract foes, clear status conditions, and even tap-dance out of danger.



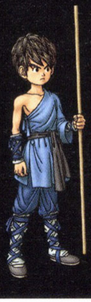
Warrior
No surprises here: Warriors are powerful, hearty, and slow. Skills that include provoking foes and guarding vulnerable characters allow them to draw fire away from more-vulnerable allies. The Warrior's attack- and defense-boosting skills are a must for frequent job-changers.



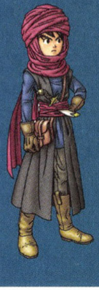
Priest
Priests don't make for very powerful fighters; however, their repertoire of healing spells makes them an essential part of any party. Focusing your skill points on the Priest's recovery abilities may be prudent, but it makes for a pretty boring character—you'd have more fun with their Spear and Staff skill trees.



Mage
Mages focus on offensive spellcasting at the expense of all else. Devote their skill points to their specialty skill tree (which will strengthen their spells) and the Wand skill tree (which will boost their max MP and ultimately provide automatic MP regeneration).

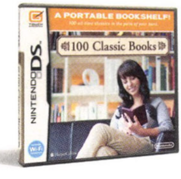


Martial Artist
Martial Artists are nearly as deadly as Warriors, and a whole lot faster. Focusing on claw weapons will allow you to strike a single foe multiple times for quick KOs, while the Bare-Handed skill tree is full of attacks that enable the Martial Artist to hit every foe on the battlefield.



Thief
Thieves have a lot of the same options as Martial Artists, but trade slightly weaker stats for the ability to cast a few recovery spells and equip stronger armor. Their exclusive skills allow you to swipe items from foes and see treasure-chest locations on the in-game maps.

One hundred books,
all in one place—your hands.
BURNETT
THE SECRET GARDEN
ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE
The HOUND of the BASKERVILLES
MARY SHELLEY
FRANKENSTEIN
LOUISA MAY ALCOTT
LITTLE WOMEN
RUDYARD KIPLING
THE JUNGLE BOOK
JANE AUSTEN
THE SCARLET LETTER
HAWTHORNE
CHARLES DICKENS
A TALE of TWO CITIES
LES MISÉRAB
VICTOR HUG
DEFOE
ROBINSON CRUSOE
MACBETH
take,
And with a gentle hand
Lay it where Child-
hood's dreams are
twined
In Memory's mystic
band,
Like pilgrim's
wither'd wreath of
flowers
Pluck'd in a far-off
land.
8
Chapter 1.
Down the Rabbit-Hole
Alice was beginning to
get very tired of sitting
by her sister on the bank,
and of having nothing to
do: once or twice she had
peeped into the book her
sister was reading, but it
had no pictures or con-
versations in it, "and
9
A
X
B
Y
START
SELECT
POWER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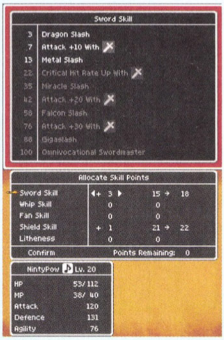
VI A Lifetime to Master

Dragon Quest IX uses roughly the same skill system as Dragon Quest VIII: characters earn skill points when they level up that can be used on a variety of weapon- and vocation-based skill trees. The difference is that between the 12 vocations, there are now more than 250 skills to learn. Players who are content merely to play through the game's central storyline should pick a few skill trees to focus on, but players who are in for the long haul can dabble in them all, mixing and matching their abilities to effectively create hybrid classes. You can max out the Gladiator's Warhammer skill tree, earning the ability to equip that weapon in other classes, and then play as a Warhammer-swinging combat Priest. You can outfit your Mage with a bow earned during her Ranger days and use bow-exclusive MP-absorption skills to power out deadly spells. There's seemingly no limit to the number of new skills to learn and combos to explore.



Sword Skill

3	Dragon Slash
7	Attack +10 With
13	Metal Slash
22	Critical Hit Rate Up With
35	Miracle Slash
42	Attack +20 With
58	Falcon Slash
76	Attack +30 With
88	Gigaslash
100	Omnivocational Swordmaster

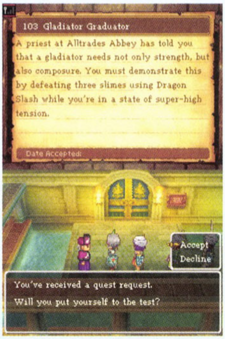
Allocate Skill Points

Sword Skill	+ 3	15 → 18
Whip Skill	0	0
Fan Skill	0	0
Shield Skill	+ 1	21 → 22
Litheness	0	0

Confirm Points Remaining: 0

NintyPow Lv. 20

HP	53/ 112
MP	38/ 40
Attack	120
Defence	131
Agility	76



103 Gladiator Graduator

A priest at Alltrades Abbey has told you that a gladiator needs not only strength, but also composure. You must demonstrate this by defeating three slimes using Dragon Slash while you're in a state of super-high tension.

Date Accepted:

You've received a quest request.

Will you put yourself to the test?

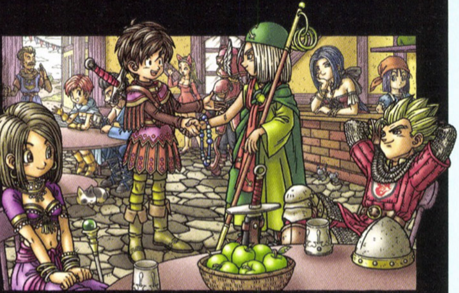
[Below] Not everything is new in this installment: Slimes, Golems, and other classic DQ foes aren't going anywhere.

Critical hit!

Does 22 points of damage to Lleviathan.

NintyPow and co. each take around 18 points of damage.

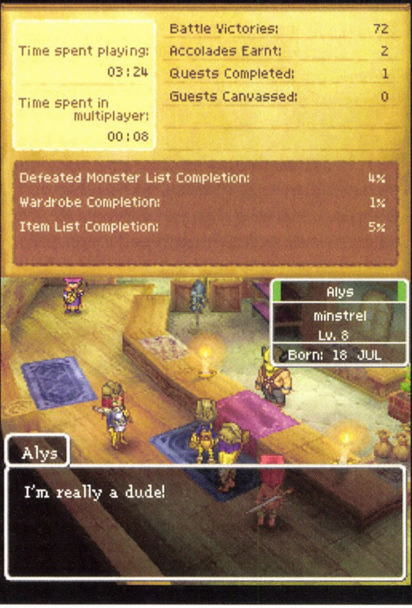
Spark attacks.



VII Otherworldly Visitors

Dragon Quest IX features an imaginative implementation of the DS system's Tag mode. Early on, you'll help a friend establish a large luxury hotel, and at any point after that you can agree to help her "canvass for guests." This involves merely closing your Nintendo DS and keeping it with you as you go about your day. If you pass within about 65 feet of another player who is doing the same thing, that player's character will become a guest at your hotel, while your own character will be happily raiding the minibar of the same hotel in that player's world. Each player can set the dialogue that his character speaks when spoken to, and give the character a treasure map to share with other players. Hotel guests come and go, but you can offer deluxe suites to your favorites to make them stick around indefinitely.

In addition to the characters met while canvassing, players who download the weekly side quests may find a few other familiar guests at the hotel. Every now and then, characters from past Dragon Quest titles will spend the night at your inn, and if you spot them, they'll give you a piece of their costume or even a wig that'll let you copy their unique hairstyles.



Time spent playing: 03:24

Time spent in multiplayer: 00:08

Battle Victories:	72
Accolades Earnt:	2
Quests Completed:	1
Guests Canvassed:	0

Defeated Monster List Completion:	4%
Wardrobe Completion:	1%
Item List Completion:	5%

Alys
minstrel
Lv. 8
Born: 18 JUL

Alys

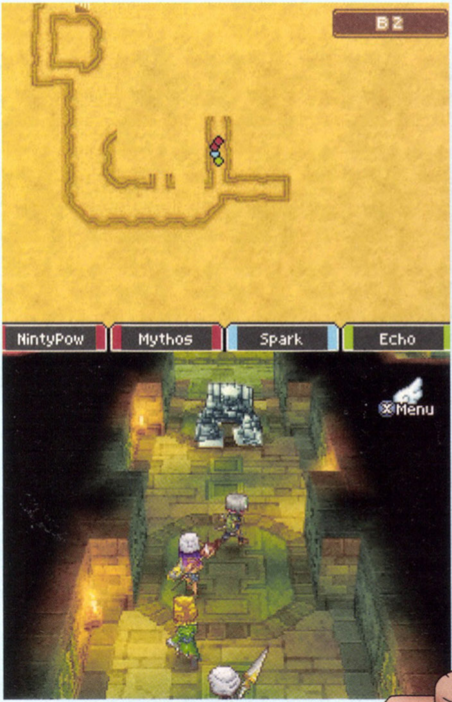
I'm really a dude!

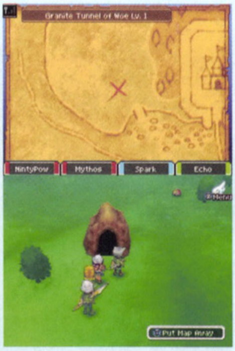
VIII

Treasure Tag

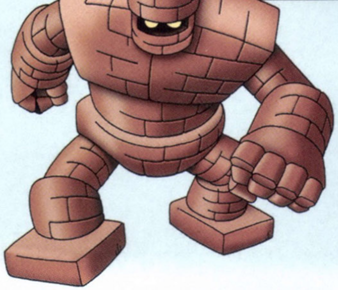
The big attraction of Tag mode is the ability to trade treasure maps, a new system in Dragon Quest IX that offers plenty of lucrative rewards and high-level challenges. In your own game, you'll occasionally earn treasure maps as a reward for completing a side quest. The maps reveal a sloppily drawn chunk of the world map with a big red X, and if you can figure out what spot it's marking, you can enter a randomly generated dungeon with one of a number of original bosses at the end. Each treasure-map dungeon you complete will lead you to the next treasure map, offering an endless series of challenges.

Since the dungeons' contents will be different for each player, you may find an especially good one full of treasure chests or high-EXP foes. If you do, you can give that treasure map to your hero to hold when you go canvassing, and he'll give copies of the map to any players he encounters in Tag mode. No matter how many times a map changes hands, it always has its original finder's name on it, allowing individual players to make a splash in the DQIX community. Some guy named Masayuki has become a legend in Japan for finding a map where players can easily battle ultrahigh-EXP Metal King Slimes, and his map has now spread throughout the entire nation!





Spark attacks.



Exploring traded treasure maps can lead to some good loot, and is a great way to level-up your characters by fighting high-EXP monsters.

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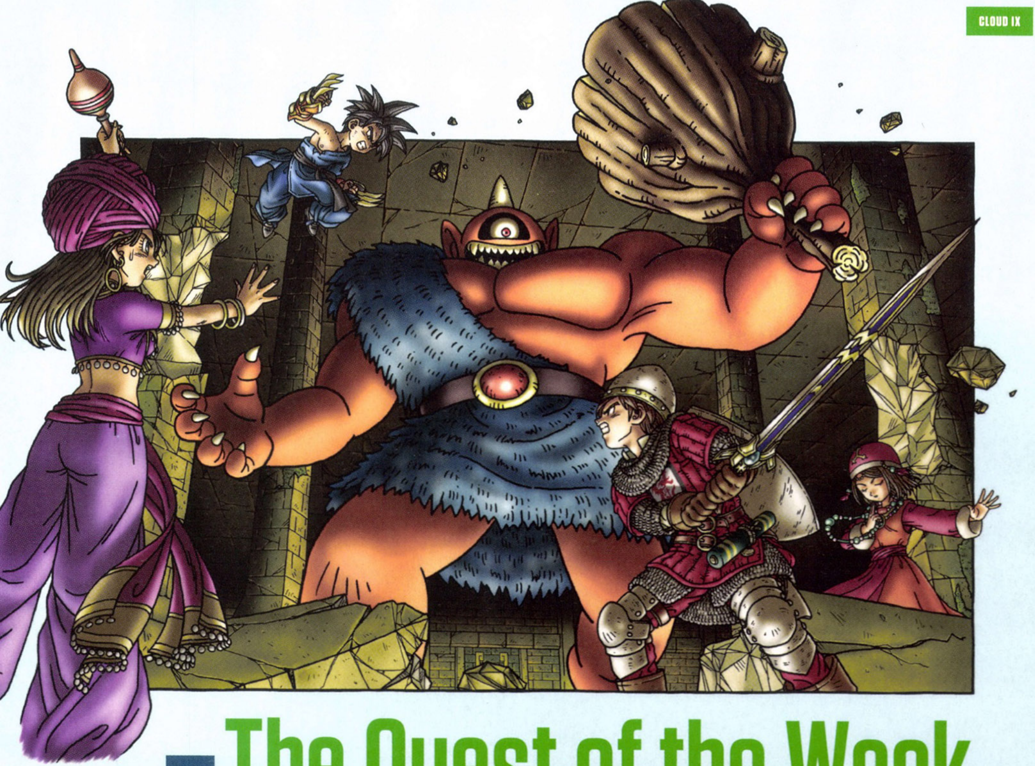
ROCK OF THE DEAD EN MASSE ENTERTAINMENT SAPPHIRE NOX EQUIP YOUR SENSES MUSICIANS INSTITUTE VINDICTUS KT

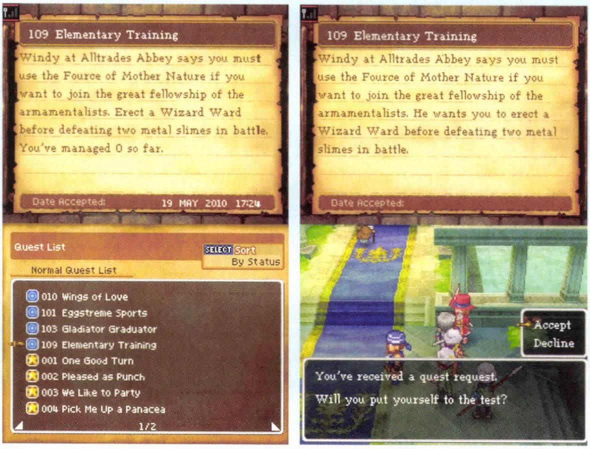


IX The Quest of the Week

Every Dragon Quest title has had a few side quests, but Dragon Quest IX features more than 100 of them and introduces a new quest log to help players keep track of their progress. Rewards include everything from rare items to new vocations to unique "party tricks"—special poses your hero can show off during multiplayer games.

With the combination of numerous side quests, an infinite number of treasure-map dungeons, and a central storyline that's less linear than usual, Dragon Quest IX almost feels like an open-world game. There has certainly never been this much to do in a Dragon Quest adventure, and amazingly, the amount of content will only increase; Nintendo plans to release one new side quest every week for a year. You can grab them free of charge via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, and while you're online you can also visit a special shop that sells rare and exclusive items (for in-game currency), which is updated each and every day.

Many of the quests are intended for high-level adventurers who have long since completed the game, providing new challenges for even the most experienced players. With this much content, it's no wonder that, according to producer Ryutaro Ichimura, the average Japanese player has logged over 140 hours of gameplay.



109 Elementary Training

Windy at Alltrades Abbey says you must use the Fource of Mother Nature if you want to join the great fellowship of the armamentalists. Erect a Wizard Ward before defeating two metal slimes in battle. You've managed 0 so far.

Date Accepted: 19 MAY 2010 17:24

- 010 Wings of Love
- 101 Eggstreme Sports
- 103 Gladiator Graduator
- 109 Elementary Training
- 001 One Good Turn
- 002 Pleased as Punch
- 003 We Like to Party
- 004 Pick Me Up a Panacea

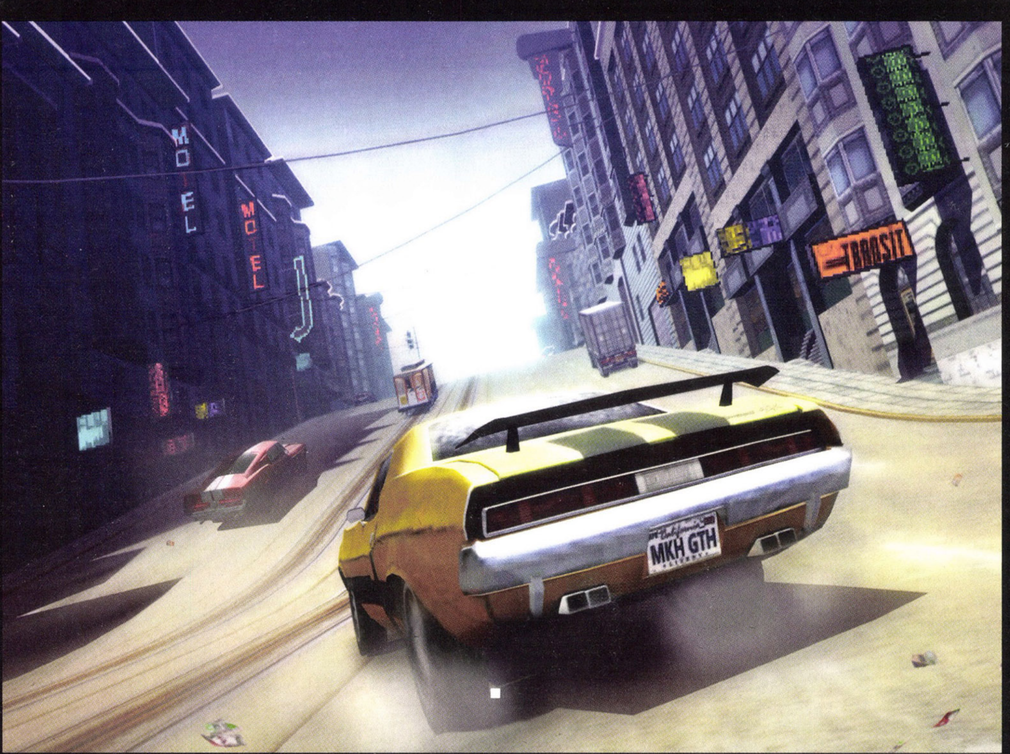
109 Elementary Training

Windy at Alltrades Abbey says you must use the Fource of Mother Nature if you want to join the great fellowship of the armamentalists. He wants you to erect a Wizard Ward before defeating two metal slimes in battle.

Date Accepted:

You've received a quest request.
Will you put yourself to the test?

The handy quest log doesn't just list your quests—it also keeps track of your progress.

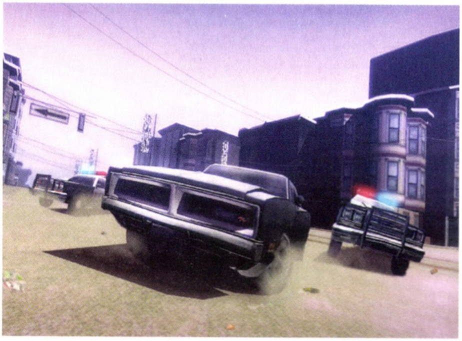

MOTEL
MOTEL
TRANSIT
MKH GTH

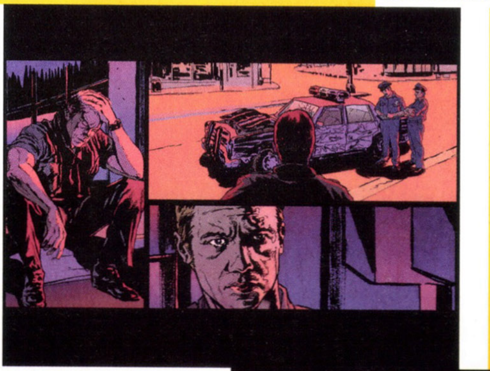
BACK in the DRIVER'S SEAT

After a run of false starts, the Driver franchise goes back to the beginning with Driver San Francisco for Wii.

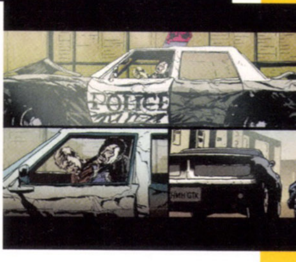
BY **JUSTIN CHENG**

PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT** DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT REFLECTIONS** RELEASE: **HOLIDAY 2010** Wii





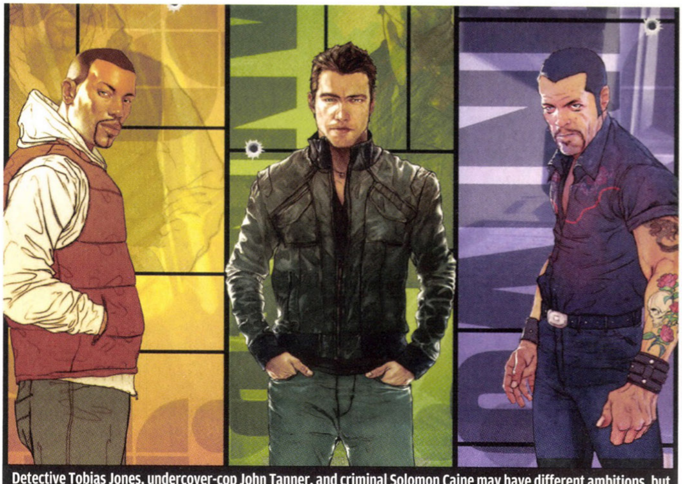
Eleven years ago, Driver for PlayStation was released to great critical acclaim thanks to its emphasis on Hollywood-style car chases. In the time since then, however, the franchise has lost much of its luster as the series has shifted away from just driving and toward becoming an open-world, Grand Theft Auto-style adventure. But for Driver San Francisco for Wii, explains Ubisoft Reflections producer Martin Oliver, the developers "really wanted to focus on the roots of what Driver is about."



Taking place entirely in the City by the Bay—which Oliver calls the "spiritual home" of the series (Driver is clearly inspired by San Francisco-set films such as *Bullit*)—this prequel to the original title "follows [longtime Driver protagonist John Tanner's] early years on the force as he hits the streets as a uniformed rookie driving a black-and-white, before going undercover to take down a crime syndicate controlling San Francisco's underworld," Oliver tells us. Tanner's out to avenge the death of his partner, and going undercover is the only way he can do that.

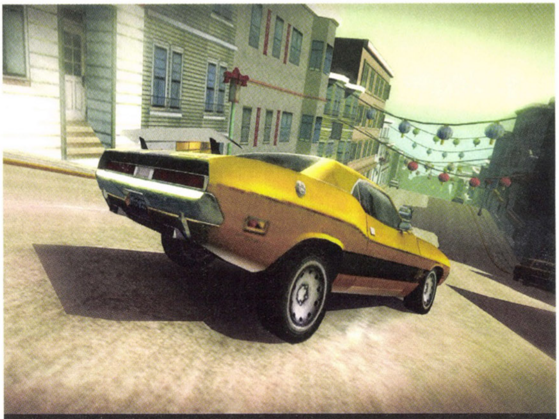
BAY CITY ROLLERS

Tanner's not the lone wheelman in this crime saga: detective Tobias Jones and criminal Solomon Caine—both of whom should be familiar names to those who have played 2000's Driver 2—are the game's two other playable characters. Whereas Tanner is forced to commit criminal acts to maintain his cover, Jones is a much more straight-and-narrow cop, "rescuing and protecting innocents or chasing down the bad guys," as Oliver describes him. On the opposite end of the moral spectrum is Caine, who Oliver describes as all about "causing mayhem and evading capture." The reason for having three narratives (which are told via comic-book-style cut-scenes; see the "Artistic License" sidebar), offers Oliver, is because the development team "thought seeing and playing things from different points of view would be a great idea that's not often explored in games. Not just in terms of an engaging plot with deep characterization, but also in terms of keeping the gameplay fresh."



Detective Tobias Jones, undercover-cop John Tanner, and criminal Solomon Caine may have different ambitions, but they all try to achieve those goals by driving as fast as possible.

Although there is an effort to keep things fresh, the developers wanted to ensure that the gameplay is always centered on driving. In fact, the on-foot mechanic that's been an element of the series since Driver 2 has been excised entirely from Driver San Francisco. "First and foremost Driver is about cars, driving, and taking part in the chase, so getting out of the car simply didn't add anything to the game we wanted to make," Oliver says. "The team are all huge Driver fans, and our vision for the game was to re-create the exhilaration and excitement of the classic cinematic car chase." For example, one of Tanner's missions has him racing to



Sure, it's not an exact re-creation—the streets are wider, there are more cardboard-box-filled alleyways, and there's a lot less traffic—but the city still feels like San Francisco.

different locations throughout the city, dropping off crates of weaponry within a time limit. Behind the wheel of his Dodge Challenger R/T—one of a handful of licensed cars in the game (the rest are generic models) —Tanner weaves through traffic while traversing the city's famous hills. Oliver reveals that the game world is not an exact re-creation of San Francisco, but it is "true to the city, with iconic landmarks that will be easily recognizable by anyone familiar with the key areas."

BEHIND THE WHEEL

The driving itself falls squarely into the arcade camp, with loose steering (in a way that's true to the feel of the original Driver, mind you) and over-the-top motion-controlled gameplay elements. "The game is unique to Wii, so we've really worked hard to take advantage of everything the platform is capable of offering gamers," Oliver elaborates. "We have added functionality like melee attacks and shunts when using your car to take down an opponent, nitro boosts to push you into the lead or help you close the gap on a rival, and a two-wheel driving mode that can offer additional points for style at any time. And with enough cool driving, players can activate Reckless mode that slows play and makes targeted shooting easier and more dramatic." To pull off such maneuvers, you use a combination of button presses and remote motions: hold the A Button and swipe left or right with the Wii Remote controller

UNDER THE HOOD

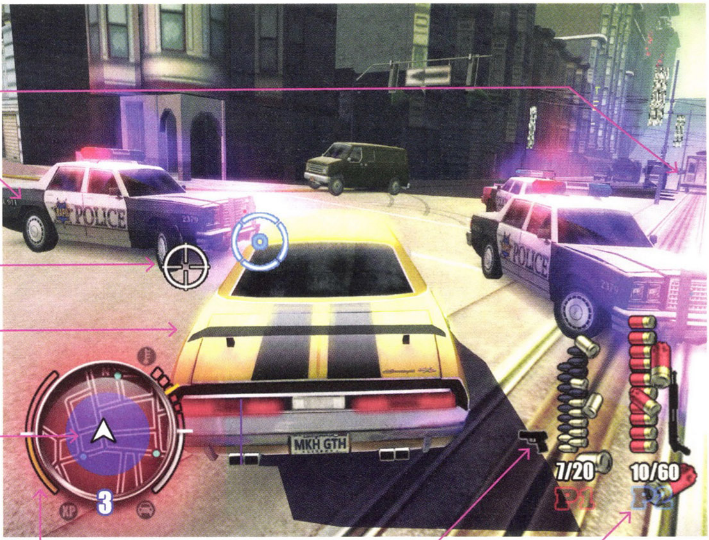
It wouldn't be San Francisco without cable cars, would it?

If you commit crimes—and you inevitably will—the cops will chase after you.

You can bring up your gun reticle by pointing at the screen with the Wii Remote.

John Tanner's Dodge Challenger R/T is one of a number of licensed cars in the game. Others include Tobias Jones's Dodge Conquest and Solomon Caine's Dodge Charger.

This map will help you navigate the city and find quest markers. You can also see the police's field of vision.



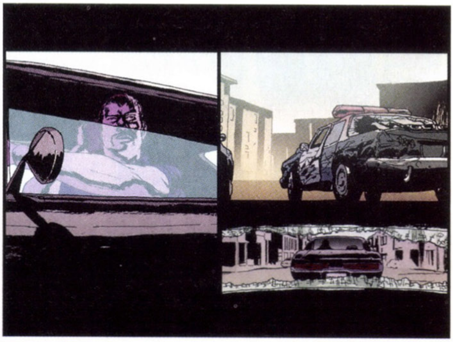
Fill up the XP gauge by completing missions and driving well.

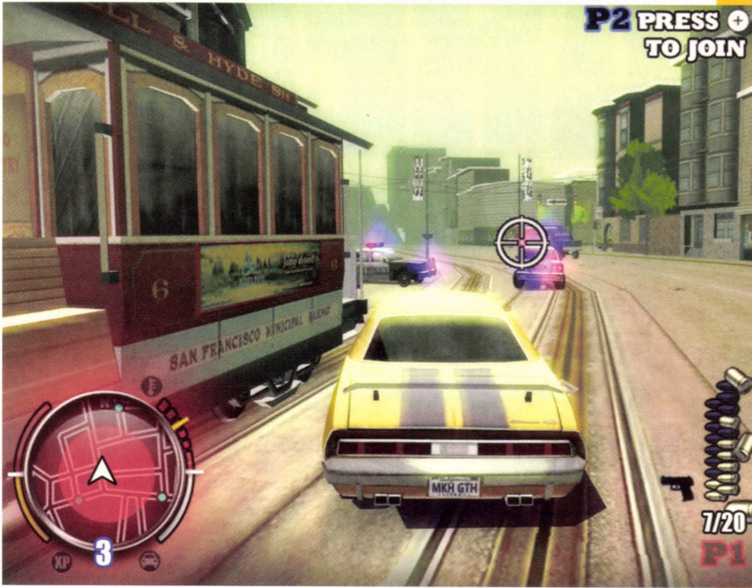
Your arsenal includes pistols and shotguns, as well as some yet-to-be-revealed weaponry.

At any time, a buddy can join in and help you shoot.

ARTISTIC LICENSE

Despite drawing inspiration from Hollywood action flicks, the developers decided to eschew traditional cut-scenes, instead telling the story via comic-book-style panels. "When looking at how to present the cut-scenes we felt the best way to do this to encompass and encapsulate the in-game art direction was without a doubt through the use of comic art," explains producer Martin Oliver. "This is a specific take on comic art, though, using flat or 'mood' colors for each scene, heavyset shadows, and a movie-style take on the presentation of each shot. Comic art ticked all the boxes for us; we could present the story in a gritty, hard-edged fashion using Hollywood camera angles and emotional set pieces, yet in a palatable and mainstream medium."





to shunt in the respective direction, for instance, or hold A and twist the remote to pop the car up on two wheels. At virtually any time, you can point the Wii Remote at the screen to aim a reticle, then tap A to shoot your firearm at your target. ("There will be a variety of weapons available to use while driving," Oliver promises.) Even better, a buddy can drop in with his own remote and shoot enemies, allowing you to focus on driving (à la old arcade game Lucky & Wild). You can also use the Wii Remote's pointer functionality during a Tobias Jones mission in which he tails a van. To listen in on the baddies' conversation with the directional microphone, you have to point and hold the remote's cursor on the enemy vehicle. Throwing a wrench into this plan is the fact that your quarry is speeding away while firing rockets at you.

Speaking of explosives, Solomon Caine is tasked with using bombs to destroy police radio transmitters (some of which are in moving police vans). He doesn't use his Dodge Charger for this, however; the explosives are placed inside radio-controlled cars (like in the Dirty Harry movie *The Dead Pool*, another film based in San Francisco), which have the same control scheme and special moves as Tanner, Jones, and Caine's cars, so driving them is a snap. The only thing you have to concern yourself with is trying not to take damage—you don't want the cars to explode prematurely, after all. Once you've navigated your way to your target, you press A to detonate the radio-controlled car. Unfortunately for Caine, the police eventually track him down, forcing him to flee. You can see your Felony Level in the corner of the screen, symbolized by three badge icons. To reduce your Felony Level, you have to either stay out of the police's line of sight for a period of time or pick up floating badge-shaped tokens that are hidden throughout the city.

In addition to these missions that propel the story, Driver San Francisco features numerous side tasks, including catching random perps who drive on the streets. While cruising around as Tobias, for example, we got several radio messages alerting us to fugitives in the area. Once they're spotted, you chase after them, slamming into their cars to disable them. You can opt not to bother, of course, but completing missions—as well as driving skillfully and finding collectibles—nets you XP that can be put toward upgrading your abilities.

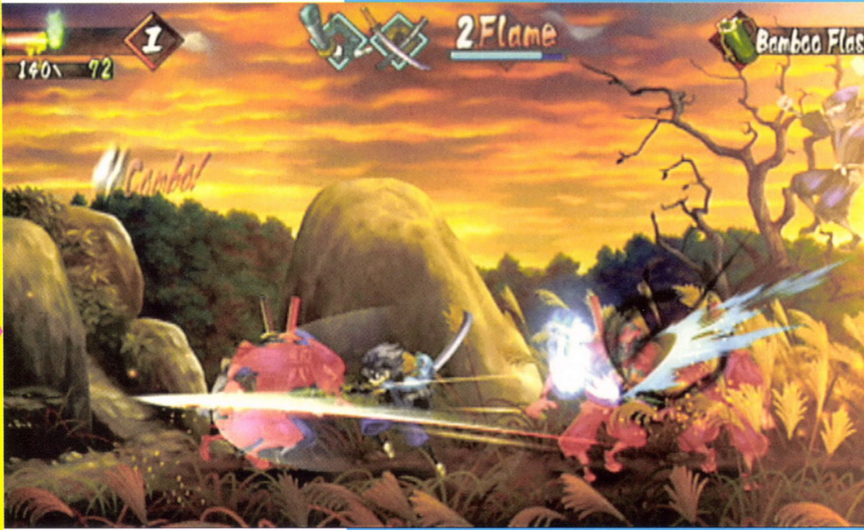
DRIVEN TO SUCCEED

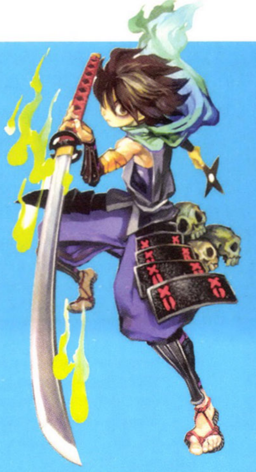
We got only a brief taste of Driver San Francisco, but it was enough to pique our interest. Ubisoft Reflections' goal of getting back to what made Driver so appealing is an admirable one—as fans of the 11-year-old original title, we hope they succeed. We'll find out for sure when Driver San Francisco is released this holiday season.

WHY AREN'T YOU PLAYING THIS?

Ten awesome Wii games you're probably not playing—but should be!

Lots of great games are released every year. Some become immediate sensations, sell millions of copies, and are supported by fans around the world. Other games, unfortunately, don't receive that attention no matter how good they are or how much acclaim they receive. Sure, it's good to go to a reliable series like Mario or Pokémon or The Legend of Zelda, but there's so much more to play—which is why we're refocusing the spotlight on a few of the games that might have slipped by undetected. The titles presented on these pages aren't necessarily flops, but they certainly deserve to rank higher on the sales charts than they have thus far. So check these games out, look 'em up, and who knows—maybe you'll discover a new favorite.





Muramasa: The Demon Blade

WHAT IS IT?

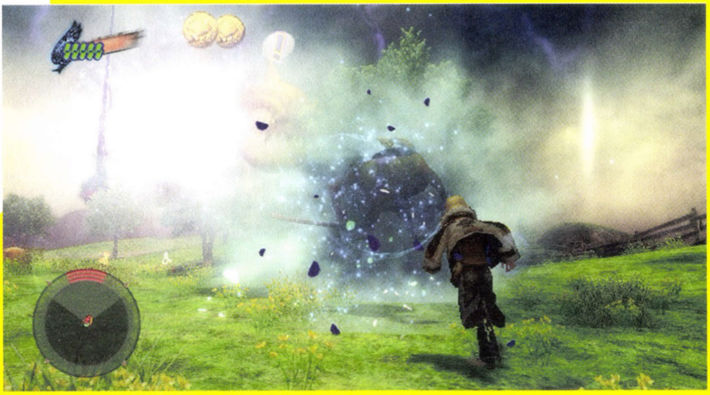
This is a side-scrolling action-RPG in which you assume the role of either amnesiac ninja Kisuke or possessed princess Momohime, and slice and dice through legions of baddies (some of which fill the entire screen).

WHY YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT PLAYING IT

Everything about this game—the title, story, setting, and aesthetics—is very Japanese, appealing to a relatively small portion of the North American audience.

WHY YOU SHOULD BE PLAYING IT

Just look at the above screen—the game is gorgeous! The jaw-dropping graphics are backed up by fast-paced gameplay that requires more strategy than simply mashing buttons, yet the controls are accessible enough that even novices should be able to pull off flashy maneuvers. Adding more depth are the RPG elements and the wide array of swords you can wield. (The latter especially, as each of the game's 108 blades has its own unique abilities.) Plus, with two playable characters and three difficulty levels, Muramasa: The Demon Blade has a good amount of longevity.



Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers

WHAT IS IT?

A single-player offshoot of the Final Fantasy franchise's multiplayer spin-off series (yeah, we're off to a rocky start already), Crystal Bearers pits a young hero who has the powers of telekinesis against a villainous military commander and a world full of iconic Final Fantasy monsters.

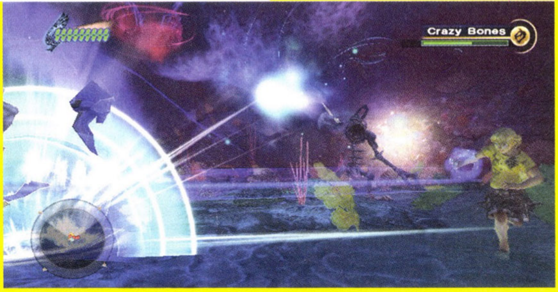
WHY YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT PLAYING IT

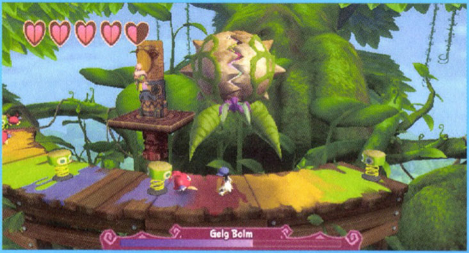
Because it's obviously not a "real" Final Fantasy game. Because it got wildly mixed reviews. Besides, maybe commercial failure would wipe that insufferable smirk off of hero Lyle's face.

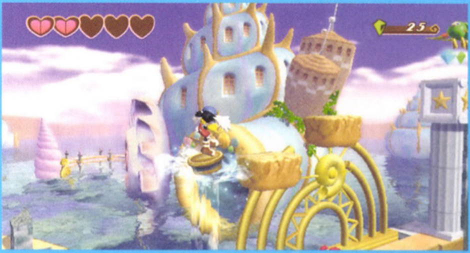
WHY YOU SHOULD BE PLAYING IT

Crystal Bearers is one of the most imaginative takes on the action-RPG genre ever attempted. The game's controls are simple and yet wildly original; you interact with enemies and characters only through telekinesis, tossing foes, objects, and NPCs alike to cause all sorts of amusing and unpredictable outcomes. The game's central storyline is a little goofy, but it delivers a few good laughs and many of the characters are charming. It also delivers a ton of gameplay surprises, with memorable minigame segments that range from a free-fall shooting game to a Chocobo chase to a ballroom-dance sequence. The main quest is short enough that you could rush through it in a day, but the game has enough diversions on the side to keep you busy for a week or two. The production values are fantastic throughout, with richly detailed environments and a rollicking soundtrack to match.

After being sucked in by the Final Fantasy name, some players have been disappointed by the unconventional gameplay and structure of The Crystal Bearers. But those willing to put aside their preconceived ideas of what it should have been will find a great deal to enjoy. I can understand not wanting to drop $50 on a game you aren't sure about, but Crystal Bearers has been marked down significantly at most retailers, and now it's selling for a song. Time to start singing!







3

Klonoa

WHAT IS IT?

A completely enhanced Wii version of the PlayStation platforming classic Klonoa: Door to Phantomile.

WHY YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT PLAYING IT

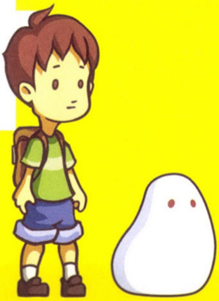
Klonoa's kind of a weird character with a name that sounds like a contagious disease. Is he a cat? A rabbit? He's definitely not a plumber. Whatever he is, he's not a major star, and he's not what you'd really call "cool."

WHY YOU SHOULD BE PLAYING IT

If you enjoy games like Super Mario Bros., you should absolutely check out Klonoa. Its unique grab-and-throw gameplay separates it from other platformers and adds just the slightest bit of a puzzle element to the action. Inexperienced players should get a kick out of simply running and jumping through the colorful levels, while veteran gamers will love the moving story and the incredibly challenging optional bonus stages. Plus, if you don't play it, Namco Bandai will never green-light a sequel, which will make us cry.

4

A Boy and His Blob



WHAT IS IT?

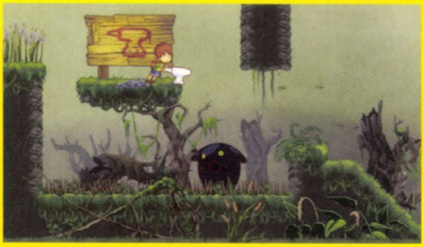
In this reinterpretation of the classic NES game of the same name, you, playing as a young boy, feed jellybeans to your friendly alien blob to transform him into a variety of shapes. By turning the blob into objects such as a cannon, an anvil, a parachute, a shield, and a ladder, you'll be able to defeat enemies and solve puzzles.

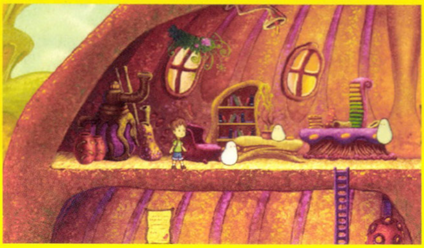
WHY YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT PLAYING IT

Because it's just so darn cute. Plus, even though the NES original is held in high regard, it certainly had its share of problems.

WHY YOU SHOULD BE PLAYING IT

Man, this game looks good! It really is a thing of beauty. If you like 2-D animation at all, A Boy and His Blob is a must-have. The gameplay is excellent as well; being able to turn the blob into different objects to overcome obstacles is a great hook. Unlike in the 8-bit original, there are no haphazard level layouts or annoying guesswork about where to go next—just clever design with enough secrets to keep you playing again and again. The end of the game is simply phenomenal; you'll cry, you'll laugh, and you'll feel really empowered as you kick the final boss's butt.





The M Zone

In regards to the games on these two pages, we know that for some of our readers the answer to "Why aren't you playing this?" is "Because they're rated M!" If that's the case for you, then look into these titles when you're older. If that's not the case, then you have no excuse....

RESIDENT EVIL

Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles

WHAT IS IT?

An original light-gun game that takes players through the events of Resident Evil 2, Resident Evil: Code Veronica, and a new South American scenario, The Darkside Chronicles is a significantly upgraded sequel to the unexpectedly successful Resident Evil: Umbrella Chronicles. But despite being clearly superior in nearly every way, it hasn't come close to matching the success of its predecessor.

WHY YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT PLAYING IT

Because you already own a bunch of light-gun games, and one of them is Resident Evil: Umbrella Chronicles, which wasn't all that great. And because Capcom needs to be punished for selling a bajillion copies of Resident Evil 4: Wii Edition, and then following up on that success with a bunch of light-gun games instead of, you know, actual Resident Evil games.

WHY YOU SHOULD BE PLAYING IT

OK, you make a lot of compelling points. But still, isn't there room for one more light-gun game? The Darkside Chronicles is so much better than its predecessor: it's longer, its graphics are more impressive, its original CG movies are as spectacular as they are numerous, and its difficulty balance is significantly smoother. Sure, it is just another light-gun game. But there are lots of light-gun games that sold way better than The Darkside Chronicles, despite having only a tiny fraction of this game's content. How sad that everyone got sick of light-gun games just when they started getting good.

SILENT HILL

SILENT HILL

Silent Hill: Shattered Memories

WHAT IS IT?

Shattered Memories is a bold and ambitious reimagining of the original Silent Hill, one of the greatest horror games of all time. It takes the core themes and characters of the 1999 PlayStation classic and twists them in unexpected ways while introducing brand-new ideas such as a psychological profile that tracks your behavior and tailors the experience accordingly.

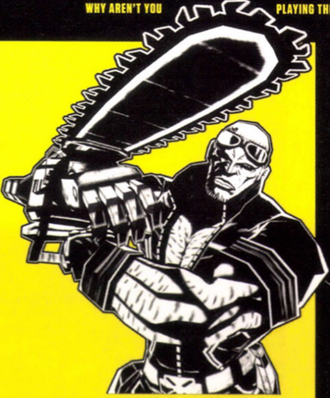
WHY YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT PLAYING IT

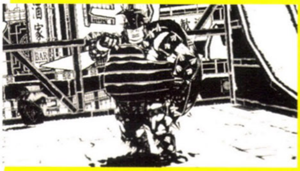
Aside from an obscure, Japan-only side story for Game Boy Advance, Silent Hill had never before appeared on a Nintendo console.

WHY YOU SHOULD BE PLAYING IT

Shattered Memories makes fantastic use of the Wii Remote controller—turning it into both a flashlight and a cell phone—to draw you in like no other game on the console. The decision to eschew combat in favor of chase scenes didn't work out as well as we'd hoped, but the unsettling ambiance, hardware-defining visuals, and compelling narrative will keep you hooked till the surprisingly poignant end. Plus, the psychological profile is an inspired concept that encourages multiple playthroughs—a rarity for this genre. If you're looking for something mature in the true meaning of the word, Silent Hill beckons.

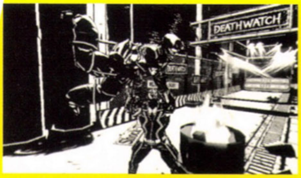
MadWorld





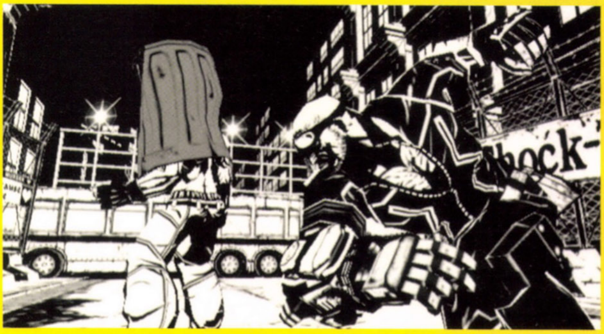
WHAT IS IT?

An original creation from PlatinumGames (developer of Infinite Space) that casts you as a contestant competing in a deadly TV game show known as *DeathWatch*. Taking on the role of Jack—a brawny brawler with a retractable chainsaw in one arm—you spear, smash and dismember your way through hordes of opponents, often using the environment itself as a (very) lethal weapon.



WHY YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT PLAYING IT

What's up with these black-and-white graphics? Is this a Game Boy game? It's tough to tell what the game's like from looking at the box or screenshots, and it wasn't exactly marketed very well to begin with.



WHY YOU SHOULD BE PLAYING IT

You won't find the sort of imaginative, over-the-top action and violence MadWorld contains in any other game. It takes the classic brawler formula and really ratchets it up several notches through the copious use of the game world and the objects in it as weapons. The motion controls are used only when necessary (and then, when used, are extremely visceral) and the look of the game—with its stark contrast of black-and-white visuals and red blood—is totally unique and cool. Plus, comedian Greg Proops and actor John DiMaggio (*Futurama*'s Bender) make the greatest (and raunchiest) commentary team you've ever heard.

Dead Space Extraction

WHAT IS IT?

This M-rated on-rails light-gun shooter—a prequel to 2008's Dead Space for PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360—tells the tale of a group of people trying to survive on a space ship that's infested with grotesque monsters.

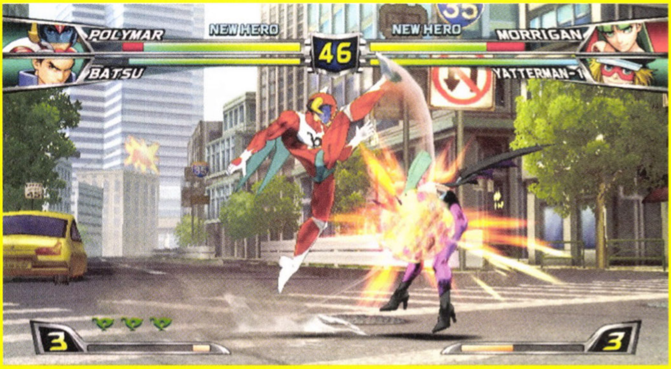
WHY YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT PLAYING IT

Most light-gun shooters don't have a lot of depth, so you might assume this one, too, is a short-lived experience. Additionally, many Wii owners have not played the original Dead Space. Plus, the box art doesn't make the game look all that enticing.

WHY YOU SHOULD BE PLAYING IT

This title is just good fun, especially when playing with a buddy. The engineering puzzles, for example, were designed specifically with co-op in mind: one player fends off enemies as the other player solves a portion of the puzzle. More intriguing than just its solid gameplay, though, is Dead Space Extraction's story, which is told via multiple perspectives. By swapping protagonists, the game gives you insight into how the Necromorph infection affects various people. And thanks to some impressive facial animations and voice acting, you really start to care about the characters and their ultimate fates.

8


POLYMAR
NEW HERO
46
NEW HERO
MORRIGAN
BATSU
YATTERMAN-1
3
3

Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars

WHAT IS IT?

A tag-team-versus fighting game with more than 25 characters from both Capcom and Japanese anime studio Tatsunoko Production. Capcom representatives have stated that the game actually outperformed predictions, but it still deserves a wider audience.

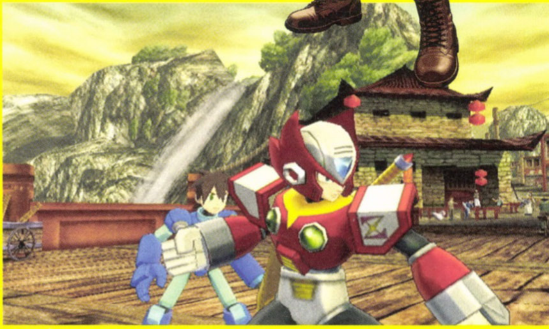
WHY YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT PLAYING IT

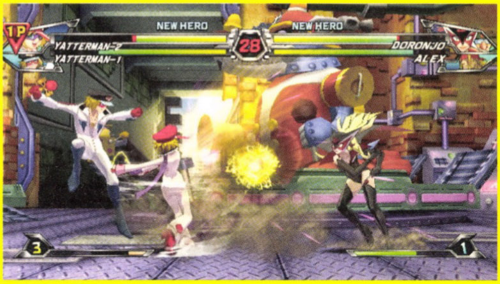
Because you can't even pronounce "Tatsunoko." And even if you can, you probably don't know who most of the studio's characters are. Heck, even some of the Capcom characters are pretty obscure. You've got to be pretty hardcore to know Saki!

WHY YOU SHOULD BE PLAYING IT

It's one of the best fighting games to come out in the last several years on Wii or any platform. It may not be as accessible as Super Smash Bros. Brawl, nor are the characters as recognizable, but in many ways it's just as good (if not better). Between the tag-team gameplay, the flashy special moves, and the ludicrous amount of damage you inflict on opponents, the action is relentlessly in-your-face, but it's got solid gameplay and precise controls to back it up. With so many control options—including the Wii Remote alone, the remote with the Nunchuk controller, or the Classic Controller—there's bound to be one to suit your fighting style, whether you're a newbie or a fighting vet. And who can resist the team of, say, Viewtiful Joe and Dead Rising's Frank West?

9

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YATTERMAN-2
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28
DORONJO
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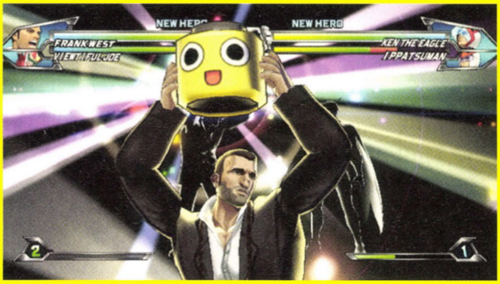
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NEW HERO
FRANK WEST
VIEWTIFUL JOE
KEN THE EAGLE
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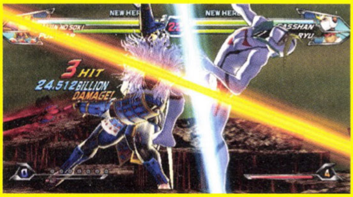
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NEW HERO
CASSHAN
RYU
3 HIT
24,512 BILLION
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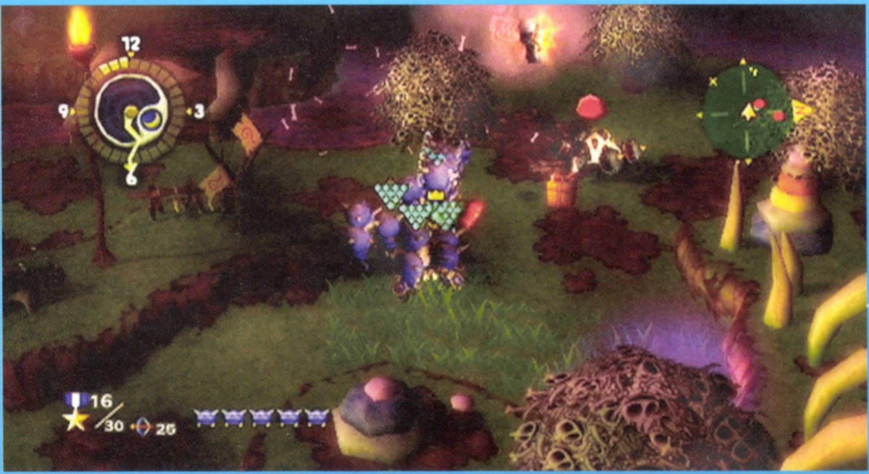


Little King's Story

WHAT IS IT?

One part action-RPG, one part "God game," and one part real-time strategy game, Little King's Story is a brilliant, Pikmin-esque adventure that defies easy description. It stars a young boy who discovers a magical crown that grants him dominion over his fellow man. With the power of the crown, he'll transform his citizens into farmers, craftsmen, and soldiers, and use their combined talents to both build his tiny town into a prosperous kingdom, and domina...er, liberate all of the rival kingdoms in the world.

WHY YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT PLAYING IT

Because it has a dumb title that tells you nothing about the game, and its supercute cover art suggests it's for tiny babies. Also, it came out shortly after Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: My Life as a King, and how many child-king simulators does one person need?

WHY YOU SHOULD BE PLAYING IT

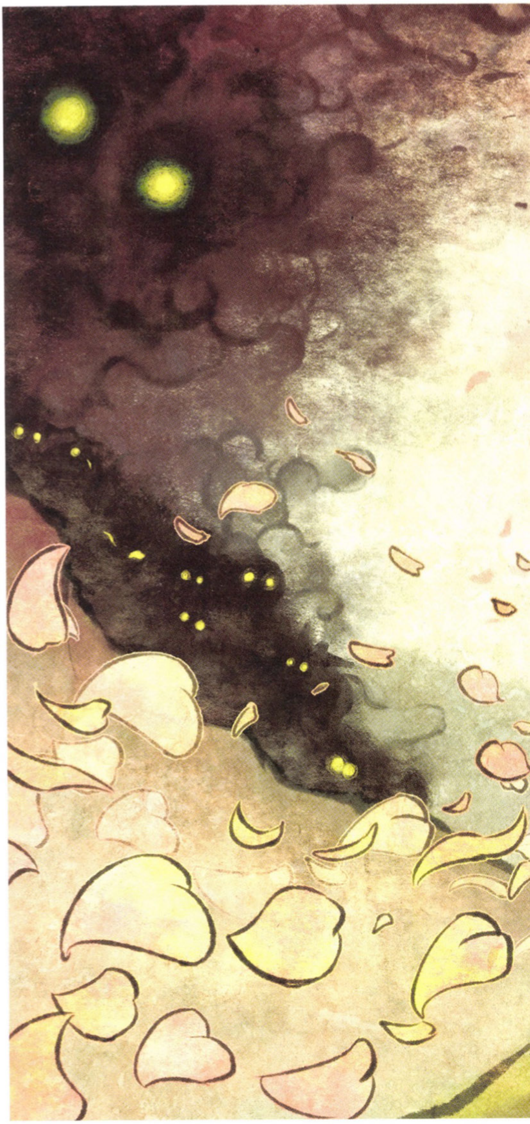
Don't be daunted by the complexity of what Little King's Story is trying to achieve; its intuitive control scheme makes a complicated genre approachable and fun. Basically, you accomplish everything in the game by pointing your scepter at your countrymen to make them join your party, tossing them into guildhouses to change their jobs, and then hurling them at fields, foes, and obstacles to put them to work. Unlike most strategy and simulation games, Little King's Story isn't structured in stages, but features a Zelda-ish open world full of new regions to explore and conquer. Raiding other kingdoms is a blast; enemy kings protect themselves with everything from giant pinball machines to geography quizzes, offering plenty of surreal surprises. Back at your home base, you can spend your plunder to commission new homes, guildhouses, and other structures, and it's as satisfying to watch your kingdom grow as it is to set off on adventures in enemy lands.

The whimsical graphics work within the game, but they may mislead players into thinking that Little King's Story is more tame and child-friendly than it actually is. The game is legitimately challenging and has certainly earned its Teen rating with its buxom princesses and debauched rival kings. Don't make the mistake of judging this book by its cover.

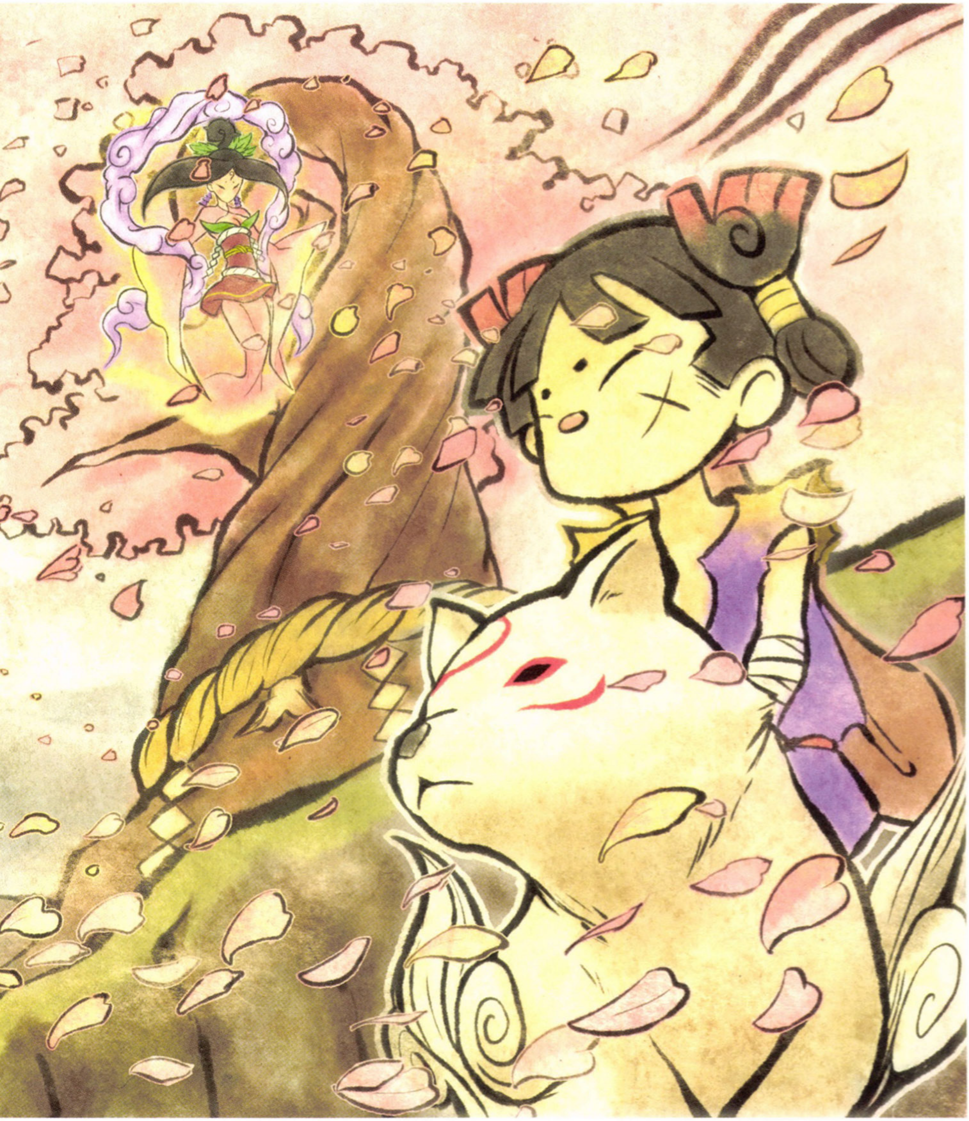
10

A Wolf in Cub's Clothing

Combining Zelda-style gameplay, an unusual wolf protagonist, uniquely Japanese aesthetics, and clever paintbrush-based special abilities, the original Okami (released on the Wii console and PlayStation 2) was an absorbing adventure that drew massive acclaim from critics and hardcore gamers. The game was as fun as it was grand, and the calligraphy-inspired play mechanics added an exciting new twist to a winning formula. The emphasis on painting also made many players feel that the title would be right at home on the Nintendo DS handheld. Evidently the powers that be at Capcom agreed: the sequel, Okamiden, is headed exclusively to DS.



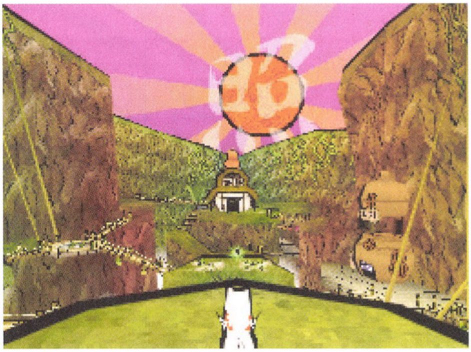
Adventure has never been more

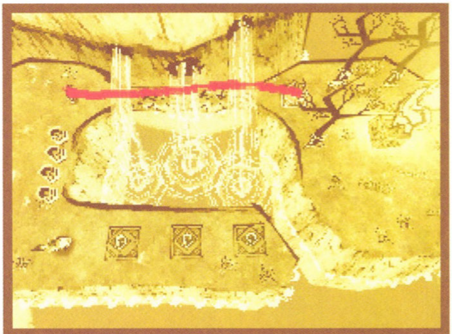


epic (or adorable) than it is in Okamiden, the DS sequel to Okami.

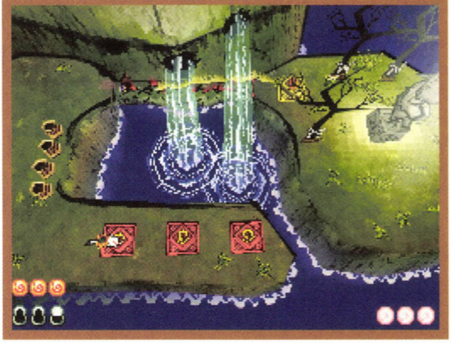
BY **CHRIS HOFFMAN**

PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM** DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM** RELEASE: **2011** DS





When using the Guidance ability, you activate the Celestial Brush to pause the action, then draw a path in red ink [above]. When gameplay resumes, your partner will follow the trail you've created [below].

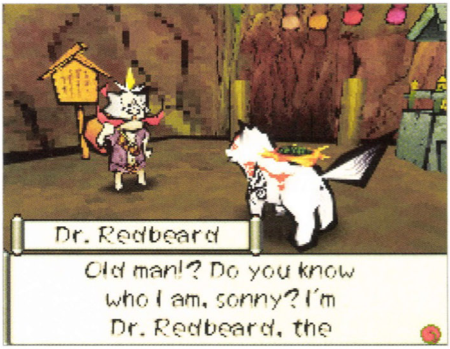


SET NINE MONTHS after the events of Okami, Okamiden returns players to the mystical world of Nippon (ancient Japan). You once again take control of a wolf deity as the main character, but it's not Amaterasu, the hero of the first game. Instead, you control Amaterasu's offspring, Chibiterasu. Apparently a lot happened in those nine months—not only did Amaterasu have a pup, but Susano and Kushi (two of the major characters from Okami) had a child named Kuni who's somehow already grown into a young boy. Chibiterasu and Kuni may be inexperienced, but that doesn't stop them from setting out to save Nippon from the forces of evil.

From a gameplay standpoint, Okamiden is much like its predecessor. You explore the world via traditional controls; you move using the Control Pad, and you jump, attack, and interact with objects or nonplayable characters with the buttons. On occasion you'll be sucked into battle in an enclosed space, and you must defeat all the enemies in real-time 3-D combat to proceed. (Unlike in Okami, you'll also face some minor enemies outside of the dedicated battle scenes.) There are numerous items to collect (such as Holy Bones for replenishing health), and you can earn Praise to level up your character. Even some of the locales are highly reminiscent of those in the original game; the first area we visited appeared to be the River of the Heavens—a series of lush green hills and bridges located amongst the vastness of space.

This area is where we got reacquainted with several familiar painting techniques from Celestial Brush Gods. By pressing L or R, you pause the onscreen action, causing the scene to turn monochromatic. You'll then have a limited amount of time to draw on the touch screen to use any Celestial Brush techniques you've acquired. Rejuvenation enables you to repair broken objects by tracing their outline; Power Slash allows you to cut through solid rocks and other objects; and Bloom lets you draw circles to revive trees and plants. You can use the brush techniques in combat, as well; after you weaken an enemy enough it changes color, signifying that you can damage it with a Power Slash or Bloom, depending on the enemy type. Unlike in Okami, your ink doesn't regenerate automatically, so it's good to think before you paint.

There are, of course, new brush

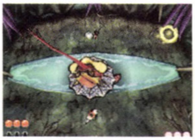


Dr. Redbeard

Old man!? Do you know who I am, sonny? I'm Dr. Redbeard, the

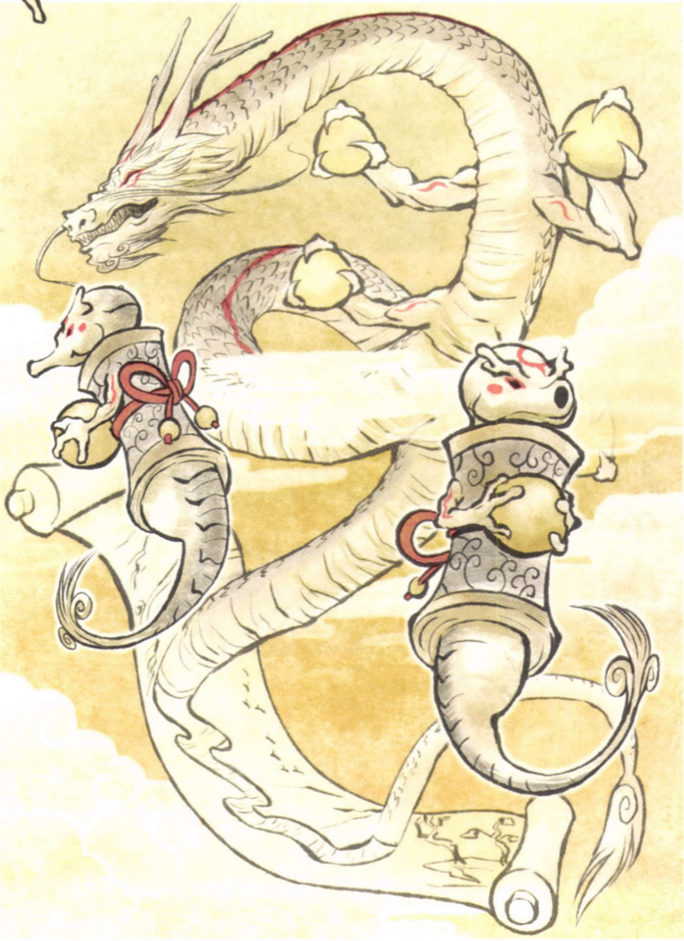
Mrs. Orange

Would you look at that!



abilities as well, such as Guidance. By pressing the X Button, you can make Kuni (and, later, other partners) dismount from Chibiterasu's back, then use the Celestial Brush to draw a path in red ink for Kuni to follow. This is especially useful when you encounter a cracked platform that Chibiterasu is too heavy to cross; by guiding Kuni across the platform, you may get an otherwise-unreachable item or activate a switch that allows Chibiterasu to proceed. Sometimes you have to use the duo in tandem to complete a task. At one point, for example, we encountered a long, cracked platform interrupted by a series of waterfalls; after drawing the path to send Kuni across the platform, we had to use Chibiterasu to step on switches to deactivate each waterfall as Kuni approached it. The Guidance power adds a whole new puzzle element to the experience, and it gives the game a feeling reminiscent of The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks.

After exploring a village and venturing into a nearby puzzle- and enemy-filled cave—home to a sacred Guardian Sapling, according to the villagers—we crossed paths with a giant frog boss named Master Anura. The ensuing battle placed a heavy emphasis on brush techniques and partner-oriented action. After Anura was weakened with physical attacks, he leapt into the air, exposing his vulnerable belly and enabling us to nail him with a Power Slash. The blow caused Anura to cough up a Guardian Sapling fruit—the source of his power—at which point we were able to guide Kuni to dispose of the fruit while using Chibiterasu to keep the boss distracted. The battle got even more complex as it went on—and this is merely one of the first boss fights!



Yomigami is one of many Celestial Brush Gods who help Chibiterasu by granting him new powers.

Leaders of the Pack

There's a whole lot more to Okamiden, so we checked in with producer Motohide Eshiro and director Kuniomi Matsushita to find out what else to expect from the game.

NINTENDO POWER Why did you and Capcom decide to revisit the world of Okami?

MOTOHIDE ESHIRO Okami became a critically acclaimed title, both domestically and internationally. I wanted to introduce the world of Okami to more users by creating Okamiden for the DS simply because I am a big fan of the world of Okami myself.

What are the benefits and the challenges of bringing this game to DS?

ESHIRO Handheld games are generally user-friendly, and it provides users with more opportunities to play games casually than playing games on home consoles. DS is perfect for an Okami game, as it features a touch screen that enables players to use the unique brush techniques more intuitively. We want to re-create the visual world of Okami by fully utilizing the DS system's capabilities, and that is one big challenge for us.

How is this game different from Okami?

ESHIRO Players can enjoy the exhilarating combat with simpler controls in Okamiden. We are putting emphasis on the puzzle-solving elements in the game [and] maximizing the fun experience of fluid brush techniques.

What is the game's story, and how does it tie in to the original Okami?

KUNIOMI MATSUSHITA The main character Chibiterasu, a child sun god in the form of a wolf pup, takes a journey with a strong partner to bring peace to Nippon facing a crisis. They will meet brand-new characters in new maps for Okamiden, as well as revisiting nostalgic characters and places from Okami. Chibiterasu and his partner scramble to save Nippon from collapsing as they cooperate throughout the journey to bring back happiness and peace to people.

What did you want to achieve with the design of Chibiterasu? I've heard female players say that he's the cutest character ever!

MATSUSHITA The game was initially designed to illustrate two young characters growing together and cooperating to foster trust and kinship through their adventure. We wanted to design a world of young and innocent characters and adventure in particular. So there are certainly some game elements that might appeal more to the female players, but we didn't specifically design the game for just female players. I think wolf puppies are generally really cute and that's probably why many female players love Chibiterasu so much.

How would you describe Chibiterasu's personality? Where did he come from?

MATSUSHITA Chibiterasu shows love toward all beings. Chibiterasu can be clumsy sometimes but has a strong sense of justice and caring toward others. Chibi is a child of Amaterasu and I do have the detailed birth story—but unfortunately I have to keep it secret for now! [Laughs]

Will you be able to acquire different kinds of weapons (reflectors, rosaries, and glaives)?

MATSUSHITA I can't be too specific at this point, but the basic weapon choices are similar to the ones in Okami. You might see weapons that are original to Okamiden, so please look forward to it!

What sorts of nonbrush abilities will you have?

MATSUSHITA One of the other important features in Okamiden is the cooperative action element with the partner character, the in-game partner system. "Two heads are better than one." That's the idea. So you will be taking advantage of that throughout the adventure.

What do you think the partner characters add to the game? How many partners are there, and who are they? Are they always with you or do they appear for only certain parts of the game?

MATSUSHITA I can't mention how many partner characters there are in the game yet, but there is more than one. Through meeting and parting with these various partners, you will see Chibiterasu grow up in the game. Chibiterasu is a child of a sun god (Amaterasu) and the partners are not ordinary humans. Each of them has a unique ability to assist Chibiterasu in various situations. You will see Chibiterasu working with a partner for most of the game, but there are some circumstances where Chibiterasu has to tackle the challenge alone.

With the addition of the partner characters and the Guidance ability, it seems like there are more puzzles than in the original Okami. Is that a fair assessment?

MATSUSHITA The red brush (Guidance) system is featured as a part of cooperative gameplay elements. There are situations where you must use this function to solve the puzzle together with the partner. We are designing the puzzles in a way that players can enjoy the process of puzzle solving instead of this function being a burden during gameplay.

Will you visit places from the original Okami, or will the locations be all-new?

MATSUSHITA You will revisit nostalgic places from Okami on PS2/Wii as well as discover new locations original to Okamiden. As you already know, Okamiden takes place nine months—which is quite a long time—after the Okami story, so the Okami players can enjoy the changes that have occurred to those familiar places or characters throughout the game.

Some people have expressed reservations about a new development team handling an Okami game. How can you assure them that Okamiden will be in good hands?

ESHIRO The Okamiden development staff is different from the Okami staff. But more importantly, all of the Okamiden staff members love Okami from the depths of their hearts and they've been devoting a great deal of their time and effort to research the game to reveal the logic behind the fun gameplay of Okami. Okamiden is being created with a profound effort from a deeply devoted staff, so please look forward to it!

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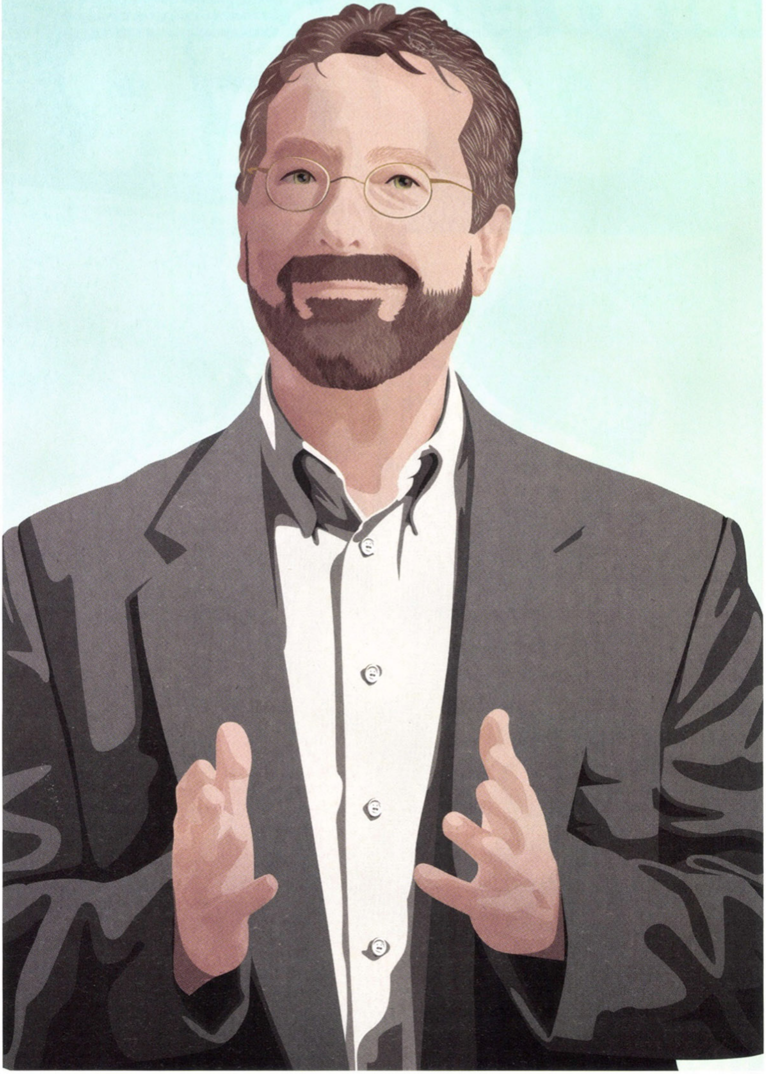
Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
October 2, 1955

BIRTHPLACE
New York, New York

POSITION
Vice president and creative director, Junction Point

BEST KNOWN FOR
Allowing players to make consequential choices; compelling us to look up what the phrase *deus ex* means

FAVORITE FOOD
A Nathan's hot dog and fries from Coney Island

CURRENT PROJECTS
Epic Mickey

Warren Spector

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

Though the Nintendo audience may not be familiar with his work, Warren Spector has long been one of gaming's most acclaimed and influential developers. His titles are renowned for drawing the player in like few others, giving us the opportunity to shape those experiences through our own decisions. Responsible for such classics as System Shock and Deus Ex, for more than two decades Spector has provided PC gamers with some of the best reasons to keep their hardware up-to-date. But he and his team at Junction Point will bring their considerable talents to the Wii console this fall with Epic Mickey. And luckily for us, Spector's knack for making memorable video games is closely rivaled by his ability to give a great interview.

NINTENDO POWER
How did you originally get into the video game business?

WARREN SPECTOR
I was working at TSR (the *Dungeons & Dragons* company) as manager of the games division and as developer/editor on tabletop games. One day—this was in 1988—I was thinking about a new game system we were working on and had a life-changing moment. I remember looking down at my hands and seeing a 20-sided die in one hand and percentile dice in the other and realizing that the biggest decision I was making in my work was what sort of dice to use! And I just realized that if that was the biggest decision I had to make in my work, I needed to find a new line of work!

At that time, I was obsessively playing computer and video games—way more than I was playing *D&D* or other face-to-face games—and I thought that electronic games looked like the future. Luckily, I'd been on some panels at conventions with computer-game guru Richard Garriott and found out he was looking for an associate producer at Origin. I interviewed, got the job, got humbled *very* quickly when I realized how different electronic games were from the paper games I'd been working on for years, and went on to a 20-plus-year career.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

When I was really young, I wanted to be a paleontologist. I was an obnoxious kid who corrected the tour guides at the Museum of Natural History when they made a mistake in the dinosaur halls.

When I hit 12 or 13, I discovered movies and realized I had to make movies, or write them, or write about them, or something. I spent the next 15 years or so assuming that'd be my life—I made a bunch of short films, tried my hand at animation, and wrote reviews for anyone who'd publish them.

I didn't actually discover games until I was in my early twenties, and as much as I loved them, I didn't see a way to make a living at it until later on.

You've often talked about your love of cartoons. How did that passion originate, and what is it about that particular medium that appeals to you?

I was a cartoon junkie from the time I was a really little kid. I lived for Saturday-morning cartoons, the classic Looney Tunes from Warner Brothers, and the Disney cartoons that showed up on *The Wonderful World of Disney* each week. My mom thought all that cartoon-watching was going to rot my brain. I wonder what she thinks now? Actually, I guess her comment when I became a Disney guy answers that question. "It's about time," is all she said. I was highly amused by that!

What was the appeal of cartoons? Man, I'm not sure. I guess I just loved the color and the energy and the anarchy. What kid doesn't love slam-bang action in a world where nothing's impossible and anything can happen? I loved the illogical logic of cartoons and, as I grew older, the pop culture (and even high culture) references. I think I learned more about classical music from Carl Stalling in his Disney and Warner Brothers cartoon scores than I did from any other source.

When I started studying animation history and making cartoons (very bad ones, happily lost in the mists of time) in my teens and twenties, I discovered a whole different level to appreciate. The artists who made the classic cartoons I'd grown up with were experimenting with their medium in ways that are absolutely mind-blowing and made me think about movies, in general, in new ways. Ultimately, I wrote my master's thesis on how cartoon characters develop over time, so I guess you could say I got an M.A. in cartoons! Anyway, character development in cartoons is a big deal to me.

If you were to recommend three classic cartoons for our readers to seek out, which would you choose and why?

Only three?! That's tough. There are so many criteria you can apply—entertainment value, historical significance, influence on other animators.... Argh! Okay, here goes.

First, Disney's *Steamboat Willie* because it's the first Mickey Mouse cartoon and the first cartoon with synchronous sound released theatrically.

Second, Tex Avery's *Northwest Hounded Police*. It pokes fun at itself, at movies, at everything, and it gets laughs from visuals, words, sounds...everything movies utilize to get laughs. And it's clearly for adults as much as for kids, like all the best cartoons.

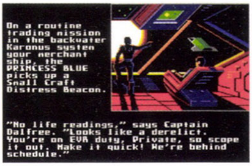
Finally, Chuck Jones's *Duck Amuck* because it does more in seven minutes to explain how cartoons are made and how movies tell stories than any other film or book ever. Everything you need to know about movies is explained in *Duck Amuck* and it's laugh-out-loud funny, to boot!

GAMEOGRAPHY

Warren Spector started his career developing games of the non-video variety with a Cthulu-themed RPG for *Fantasy Gamer* magazine in 1984. He moved to the digital realm in 1989 and has worked on more than 30 PC and console titles since then.

Fantasy Gamer
Lost Worlds Featured Review
"The Thing in the Darkness" Call of Cthulhu Solo Adventure

THING IN THE DARKNESS
1984, FANTASY GAMER MAGAZINE
EDITOR, DEVELOPER



On a routine trading mission in the backwater Karonus system your merchant ship, the PRINCESS BLUE picks up a Small Craft Distress Beacon.

"No life readings," says Captain Dalfree. "Looks like a derelict. You're on EVA duty, Private, so scope it out. Make it quick! We're behind schedule."

SPACE ROGUE
1989, PC
ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

WING COMMANDER
1990, PC
PRODUCER

Iolo
7-05-0161 Wind: SE

Friend Iolo.

"Well, DarkVale, do you need help with something? Or maybe you've got time for a story, eh?"

you say:

ULTIMA VI: THE FALSE PROPHET
1990, PC
PRODUCER, WRITING/DIALOGUE/STORY

Power Profiles

One of the defining characteristics of your games is that they give the player meaningful choices with real consequences. Can you pinpoint the moment when you realized that was important to you?
There were two moments, really; one in my paper-gaming days and a second in my electronic-gaming days.

The paper-gaming realization came very early in my *D&D* days and wasn't so much a moment as an ongoing realization. I was part of a group of players who didn't have much use for published adventures or settings. We made up our own adventures and we loved to throw the gamemaster curveballs. If we were told to go right, we'd go left. If we were told to fight, we'd decide to talk. It was obnoxious, but that feeling of freedom, of being able to take the story where *we* wanted it to go, rather than where the gamemaster planned for it to go...that was powerful and really changed the way I thought about storytelling and gameplay. By the time I came to the electronic-gaming world, I was ready to see if I could bring that kind of "power to the player" attitude to my work there.

Luckily, I ended up at Origin, where Richard Garriott and Paul Neurath, in particular, were moving in similar directions. I certainly learned the limitations on player empowerment in the electronic game world, but I also stumbled on the potential fairly early on. Here, there was one specific moment that turned my thinking around and set me on a course I'm still on today.

When Richard Garriott and I planned out the missions and quests and puzzles for Ultima VI, he had a rule, basically, that said every puzzle would have at least two planned solutions. But there was one puzzle where we only came up with one solution—the player was on one side of a portcullis and had to flip a lever on the other side to raise the portcullis so he or she could continue making progress. To do this, you had to have a telekinesis spell. So one day, I was watching a tester go through the game and he got to the portcullis but hadn't yet learned the telekinesis spell. "Ha! He's hosed," I said to myself. Well, it turned out that he had a character in his party named Sherry the Mouse who was, as you might expect, a mouse. She was really small...small enough to be sent under the bars of the portcullis, walk right up to the lever, flip it, and raise the portcullis! We had modeled the bars of the portcullis with enough fidelity, and modeled Sherry the Mouse where her size really mattered to the game simulation. And that allowed the player to discover a solution to a problem in the game that the designers hadn't planned. The player was the creative one, not us! I was floored by that accident and determined right then and there to make it my life's work to create games built to make moments like that possible.

What are your thoughts on video games as a story-telling medium? What challenges and opportunities do they present that differ from other narrative forms, like novels and film?
I think video games are a great storytelling medium unlike any other. The most obvious difference is that games allow users to act, rather than watch, read, and/or interpret. That's huge, and as odd as it sounds, it's something developers don't exploit nearly enough. In most games that tell stories, the story really does belong to the developer of the game, with player choices being limited to stuff like "what weapon will I use to take out that enemy?" or "will I choose this conversation option, first, or that one?"

I think we need to do a lot more to empower players to tell their own stories, or at least collaborate with us to tell stories. I want to be able to decide whether I use a weapon at all, or choose to talk to my enemies. I want to decide whether I do a mission or not. I want to be able to talk or sneak or fight and see the consequences of those choices in how the rest of the story plays out, as well as how the other characters in the story change their opinions of me as a result.

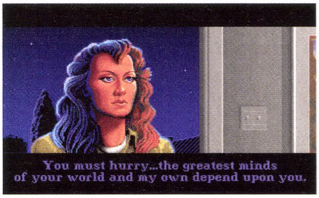
The real power of games isn't in figuring out what a designer wanted me to do or in executing a maneuver the designer insisted I execute. The real power of games is in solving problems the way I want to solve them, to decide for myself who I'm going to befriend and who I'm going to ignore, and to craft a unique experience in a compelling game world. When we make games that allow players to be the authors of their own stories, we're beginning to live up to our potential.

Between Wing Commander, Ultima, Thief, Deus Ex, and now Epic Mickey, you've worked with a pretty wide variety of settings. Is that something you've purposefully pursued throughout your career?
Oh, yes, very much so. And your list doesn't even include Wings of Glory, my World War I flight sim! Heck, if you do the same thing over and over, you're going to get bored, so I try not to do it.

I remember a time back in the '90s when I had done so much fantasy stuff I was just determined never to make another fantasy game ever. Of course, now that some time has passed, I'm about ready to give

> *"I think we need to do a lot more to empower players to tell their own stories, or at least collaborate with us."*

GAMEOGRAPHY

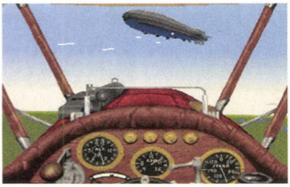


You must hurry...the greatest minds of your world and my own depend upon you.

ULTIMA WORLDS OF ADVENTURE 2: MARTIAN DREAMS
1991, PC
PRODUCER

MAGNUM 2100
12
HOLLOW
E
SIDE + - FULL

SYSTEM SHOCK
1994, PC
PRODUCER



WINGS OF GLORY
1995, PC
PRODUCER

"Nothing's better than living in a world where no one knows what'll come next."

fantasy another try.... And certainly after a couple of Deus Ex games, there were a lot of people who just expected me to keep working in the world of near-future, real-world, science fiction.

I can't stick with one thing, no matter how much people want it. I have to shake it up or I get colossally bored. How lucky is it that over the years I've been able to work with a variety of creative folks, a bunch of different teams, on a varied slate of games? Nothing's better than living in a world where no one knows what'll come next.

Last time we chatted, you mentioned that the other classic Disney character you'd really like to work with is Uncle Scrooge. What sparked your fondness for that particular character?
Well, I've been a comic-book fan since I was a little kid. I love superhero books, for sure, but I fell in love early on with the Uncle Scrooge stories in the old Disney comics. The stories were incredible—high adventure at its best. They took me to places where dinosaurs still roamed, ancient civilizations still flourished in mysterious jungles, enormous jewels were waiting to be found, and pirates and living mummies were just a part of everyday life for the richest duck in the world. Basically, Scrooge was Indiana Jones before Indiana Jones was a gleam in the eye of Spielberg and Lucas. The quality of the drawing was just amazing, too—rich, lush, colorful, beautiful stuff. And the writing was witty and fun. What more could you want?

Years later, I discovered all of those stories were written and drawn by a guy named Carl Barks—simply the best comic book-artist and writer ever. When some of those stories were brought to life in the *DuckTales* cartoon series, I was in hog heaven. And I was in my thirties when that show aired—not a kid anymore, that's for sure!

I'd love to bring that kind of adventure, charm, wit, and fun-for-kids-and-adults duck action to a game someday!

We also discussed your love for Nintendo games. What is it about that company's work that makes it stand out to you? And if you had to choose a favorite Nintendo title, what would it be?
Nintendo has always had a way of making what I think of as "gamers' games" appealing even to non-gamers. I really admire the ability of Nintendo designers to focus on gameplay and player experience. There's so much pressure to fill the screen with flash and sizzle that contributes nothing to play. Somehow, Nintendo manages to avoid all of that and "just" make great games. The quality of the Nintendo titles is insane—you can always count on that. It's a little like Disney is in the world of animated films, I guess. You know you're going to get your money's worth.

As far as a favorite title, that's easy—The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past. That's one of my favorite games of all time. I own it on every platform it's available on. It's just a perfect little jewel of a game to me.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?
The thing I most love about making games is working with incredibly smart, creative people. But there's another incredible aspect of the job, and that's simply that we're still a young medium, which means you can pretty much count on coming into the office every day and seeing something that literally no one on the planet has ever seen before. Everyone who makes games for a living has the opportunity to define a new medium of expression and communication—an opportunity that comes along once or twice a century. How cool is that?

What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect?
Shigeru Miyamoto. The man's been a part of the creation of so many games I love, including the Zelda series, which is, without question, my favorite game series ever. There's a part of me that really wants to meet him, but there's another part that wonders what would happen if I ever got the chance. Would I be able to croak out a question or two, or would I be too awe-struck to open my mouth? It's unclear!

Others? Well, I wish I was as sharp and creative as Doug Church. I wish I was half as clever and funny as Tim Schafer. I wish I was as smart as anyone at Valve. I recently had the pleasure of meeting Satoru Iwata, and all I can say is that I was blown away by the coolness of Nintendo's CEO being a dev guy. That never happens, and it was incredible having a conversation with him.

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
Can I have more than one? Let's just take game-playing as a given. I love books and reading. And movies. And basketball, though as a spectator, not a player...I have no skills whatsoever! And I love playing the guitar. I have 20 guitars, including two Mickey Mouse guitars, and a bunch of amplifiers and effects pedals.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
Back in my paper-game days, I was working with a couple of guys on a superhero role-playing game, and we actually gave this question a lot of thought. I was thinking about a power ring or super strength when one of my coworkers said that I already had a superpower: make others smarter. I quite liked that and hope it's true! I certainly depend on my teams for every bit of success I've had in my career. I like to think I've helped all those folks be smarter and better than they even thought they could be. I'd be quite proud of that!

DEUS EX
2000, PC
PRODUCER/PROJECT DIRECTOR

THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS
2004, PC/XBOX
STUDIO DIRECTOR

EPIC MICKEY
2010, Wii
PRODUCER

Who needs a sword when you've got a sweet shield?

Nintendo
GAME BOY
FINAL FANTASY
ADVENTURE
SQUARE

Final Fantasy Adventure

Hey, you got some Mana in my Final Fantasy!

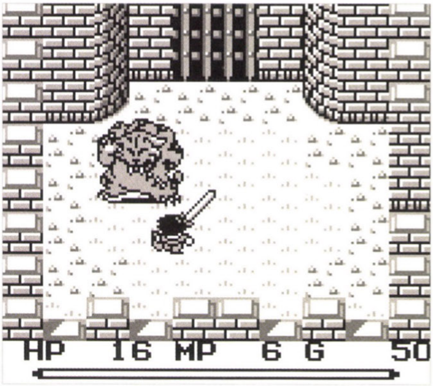
PLATFORM: **GAME BOY**
PUBLISHER: **SQUARESOFT**
DEVELOPER: **SQUARESOFT**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 1991**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **28, 35, 51, 109, 110, 111**
NUMBER OF TIMES YOU MUST DEFEAT THE FINAL BOSS TO BEAT THE GAME: **3**

One of the best things about the Game Boy was its uncanny ability to turn many agonizing hours spent in the uncomfortable back seat of the family car during road trips into awesome sessions of monster-slaying, evil-thwarting, and magical-item collecting. And few games had the epic staying power to hold one's attention like Final Fantasy Adventure.

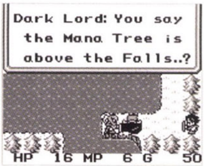
The quest follows the story of a young man forced to fight in an arena for the amusement of the Dark Lord who killed his parents. After escaping and uncovering the evil ruler's plot to crush the sacred Mana Tree and plunge the world into darkness, you set out on a journey to stop the magical tree's destruction.

As the game's title implies, Final Fantasy Adventure was a spinoff rather than a traditional Final Fantasy game. It abandoned random turn-based battles in favor of a stronger action vibe; the real-time combat had you swinging weapons manually and flinging spells directly at enemies rather than queuing up attacks via menus. Additionally, the Zelda-esque overworld was divided into map grids, and many areas were accessible only with specific weapons acquired at key points in the quest. Axes cut trees, sickles shredded thorny brush, and chains let you cross rivers. Even the mazelike dungeons incorporated this intriguing puzzle element into their designs. Further, monsters had immunities to certain weapons, requiring you to switch gear often to adapt.

Although the game featured a few elements from other Final Fantasy games (including cameos by Moogles and a Chocobo steed), its bold deviations from the Final Fantasy formula allowed the game to stand on its own. In fact, the title's sequel—the beloved Secret of Mana for the Super NES—dropped the Final Fantasy name entirely and gave rise to a completely separate franchise. But for most players, Final Fantasy Adventure's history doesn't matter; the important part is that it was one of the most absorbing adventures for the Game Boy. Plastering "Final Fantasy" on the cover guaranteed the game would make it into the hands of the faithful, and we're all the better for it. **—NATHAN M.**



When fighting a saber-toothed tiger, walk softly and carry a big sword.



Dark Lord: You say the Mana Tree is above the Falls..?

FANTASY REDUX

Final Fantasy Adventure was such a solidly enjoyable game that it deserved to stick around. Publisher Sunsoft thought so, too—the company rereleased the Game Boy game in 1998 after the original print run had long since sold out. Then in 2003, more than a decade after the Game Boy original appeared, Square Enix completely revamped the game and released it (in conjunction with Nintendo) as Sword of Mana for the Game Boy Advance. Though it kept most of the story, characters, and basic gameplay intact, Sword of Mana sported a completely new look and integrated elements of other Mana titles into the gameplay. Notably, you could choose to play as a male or a female protagonist, and each had unique story elements to experience.

HAVE A FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME YOU'D LIKE TO SEE REVISITED?
Send us your requests—we'll consider them for a future installment of Playback. nintendopower@futureus.com

REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES

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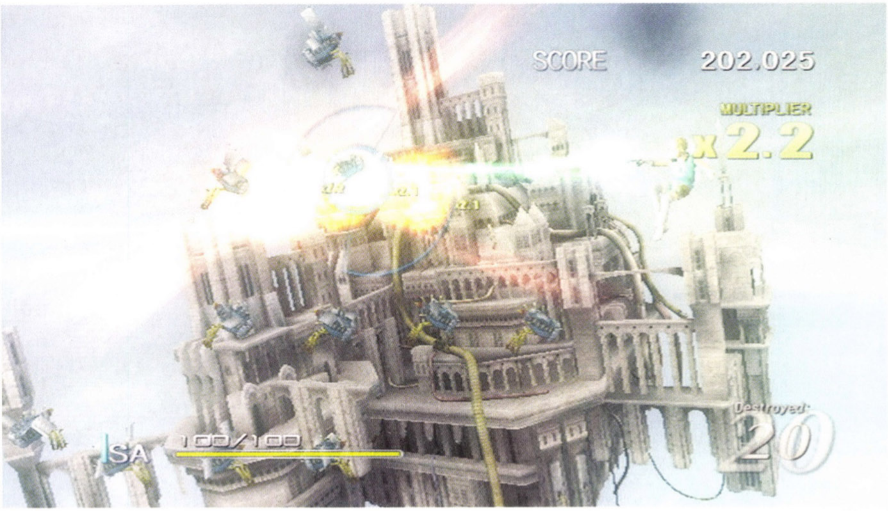
We're not sure where the "Sin" comes in, but Nintendo's amazing action epic delivers a whole lot of punishment!



Sinfully Spectacular

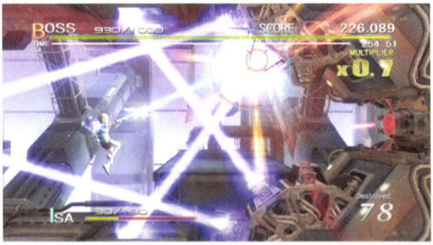
SIN AND PUNISHMENT: STAR SUCCESSOR

RATING: 9.0

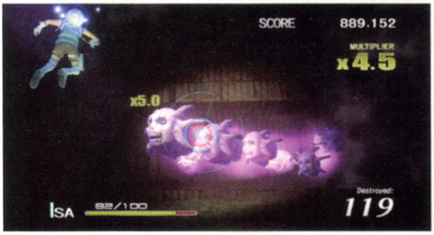
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **TREASURE**
ESRB: **TEEN**

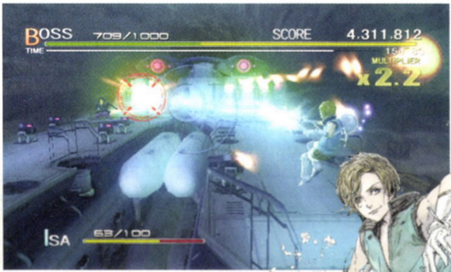
Thank goodness for small miracles. The original Sin and Punishment for the Nintendo 64 was a critical darling, but it achieved only lukewarm sales in Japan and wasn't even released in North America until seven years after the fact on Virtual Console. The odds of a sequel ever emerging seemed infinitesimal, yet here is Sin and Punishment: Star Successor—available on these shores, no less! And just as its forerunner set the bar on N64, this is the best pure action game the Wii console has ever seen.

That part of the story isn't much of a shock considering the studio responsible. For almost 20 years now, Treasure has been serving up one frenetic masterpiece after another, from Gunstar Heroes (Sega Genesis) to Astro Boy: Omega Factor (Game Boy Advance). These folks know how to keep you on the edge of your seat, and Star Successor is certainly no exception. The screen is constantly saturated with activity, be it swarms of enemies, hundreds of projectiles, massive bosses, or a combination of all three. But make no mistake: what looks like utter chaos has been meticulously designed by some of the best in the business. Forward movement is on rails, allowing the developers to frame the action in the most impactful way possible and leaving players to focus on maneuvering the hero and dishing out righteous punishment. To survive this symphony of destruction requires Zen-like focus and a mastery of all the techniques available to you—shooting, slashing, dodging, deflecting missiles, etc. Unless you're a video game savant, expect lots of trial and error, as well. Much of Star Successor's greatness stems from hitting you with something new around every turn. The game is extremely difficult as a result, but every time you retry a segment or refight a boss, you'll



[Above] You think this looks crazy? It pales in comparison to what comes later. [Below] In stage four, your gun doubles as a flashlight.





discover some new trick that makes things just a little bit easier. It's the sort of challenge that ultimately satisfies rather than frustrates, aided by the provision of infinite continues and a generous number of midstage checkpoints.

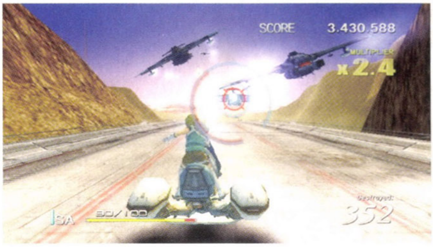
Star Successor offers a bevy of control options—including support for both the Classic and GameCube controllers. The default scheme with the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers works brilliantly, though, and quickly became our preferred way to play. You can also choose from two playable characters, each with significant differences. Kachi is recommended for beginners thanks to her autotargeting ability and a special attack that can lock onto multiple foes at once (à la Panzer Dragoon). On the other hand, Isa's blasts are a bit more powerful, and his melee strikes have greater reach. Only one character can appear onscreen, but a second player can join in as the unseen partner, controlling a crosshairs in a Super Mario Galaxy-esque co-op mode.

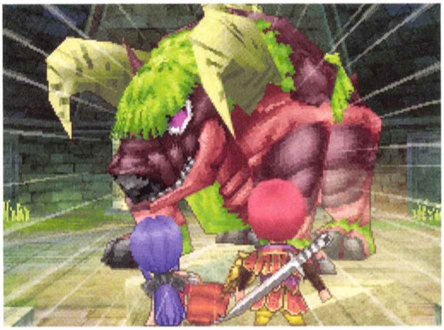
The personalities of our heroes are decidedly less compelling than their abilities, and if there's a fly in Star Successor's ointment, it's the cringe-inducing narrative that revolves around the pair. Storytelling has never been one of Treasure's strong suits, and the plot here is pretty much impenetrable nonsense. What's more, the too-frequent cut-scenes are poorly animated and awkwardly voiced. At least you have the option to skip them, and once you get back to blowing things up, the horrible story drifts mercifully from your thoughts in about two seconds.

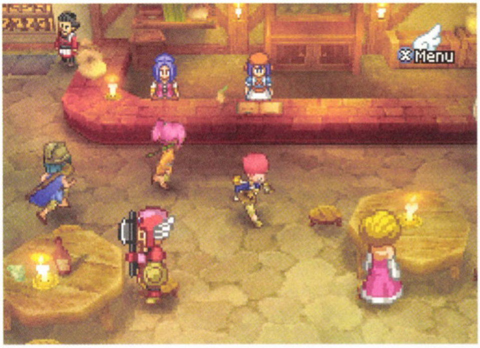
Treasure's greatest talents have always lain in creating memorable boss battles, and with Star Successor, the studio puts on a clinic. Each of the game's seven lengthy stages throws multiple bosses at you—often one right after the other—and the variety is staggering. No two concepts are ever repeated. You'll knock train cars into a pursuing behemoth, clash blades in an airborne sword duel, pick off the armaments of a giant battle ship, and even face off with a dude who turns into not one, but *multiple* dolphins. Our favorite, though, is a three-part encounter that unfolds over the course of an entire stage. First you take on a saber-toothed tiger, then a little later an overgrown vulture picks a fight with you. At the end of the level, the two creatures merge into a gargantuan megaboss. Someone on the development team obviously shares our fondness for the Transformer Sky Lynx.

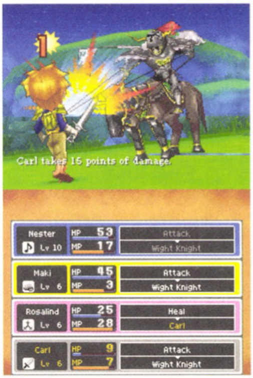
From a strictly technical standpoint, Star Successor's visuals fall short of games like Super Mario Galaxy 2 and Red Steel 2. Most of the character models are fairly crude and the lighting is pretty flat. But when you're tossing so much on the screen at once, such shortcomings are understandable. Plus, they end up being overshadowed by the sheer spectacle of it all. As you're running through the desert and the sky suddenly goes dark with dozens of bombers dropping their ordnance like an explosive downpour, polygon counts are the last thing on your mind. A pumping, old-school soundtrack is reminiscent of Treasure's previous work and complements the action to a T.

For a certain type of player, the game's deep scoring system and online leaderboard will give ample reason to keep coming back for more. A score multiplier increases for every enemy or projectile that you destroy, and decreases every time you take a hit. You also earn bonus points for defeating bosses quickly (which requires learning their weaknesses), and special medals throughout the game reward you for accomplishing secret tasks. Even if you're not that hardcore, Star Successor is a phenomenal experience worthy of your attention. Miracles don't come around often. —**STEVE T.**








Carl takes 16 points of damage.

Nester Lv 10	HP 53 MP 17	Attack Wight Knight
Maki Lv 6	HP 45 MP 3	Attack Wight Knight
Rosalind Lv 6	HP 25 MP 28	Heal Carl
Carl Lv 6	HP 9 MP 7	Attack Wight Knight

Heaven-Sent

DRAGON QUEST IX: SENTINELS OF THE STARRY SKIES

RATING: 9.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **SQUARE ENIX / LEVEL 5**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Dragon Quest IX is easily the boldest installment of the series's 24-year run. Of course, that isn't saying much—although series director Yuji Horii always brings a lot of creativity to the story and structure of each new installment, the basic mechanics of the series have evolved at a glacial pace. But in the first original Dragon Quest for a handheld platform, Horii has shaken up the series by packing it with multiplayer options, gameplay upgrades, and online features. Most impressive of all, he's done it without making any significant sacrifices to the series's core single-player experience.

The game's most notable new feature is the ability for two to four players to team up at any point in the lengthy adventure (save for a brief opening sequence) by using a local wireless connection to warp into each other's game world. Players are not forced to share a screen, fight together, or even be on the same in-game continent—a rare programming feat that allows co-op partners to split up when exploring dungeons or pursuing side quests. However, there are some significant restrictions that will frustrate anyone who had hoped to play through the entire game with a friend or family member. One player must be chosen to host the session, and only that player will have the power to advance the storyline, command NPC party members, and acquire most types of treasure. Other players will be relegated to a sidekick role that allows them to acquire only experience points and common items.

Once players complete every step in the game's central story, the co-op mode takes center stage as the game serves up hundreds of hours of side quests to complete, randomized dungeons to explore, and new skill trees to master. This postgame content is typical, filler-heavy MMO fare—lots of side quests that involve killing a certain number of monsters or collecting a certain quantity of rare items—and will be of little interest to solo players. But they provide an endless series of reasons to get together with friends and hunt down a cool new piece of armor or master some high-level skill.

Adventurers who choose to go it alone should still find plenty to enjoy in Dragon Quest IX. Sure, the player-made characters are completely devoid of personality, but the Dragon Quest series has rarely relied on a charismatic cast to drive its storylines. Instead, Dragon Quest IX finds its emotional beats in an imaginative story about an angel collecting divine fruits that spread corruption wherever they fall in the mortal world. The tale is much shorter than the 100-hour epics of Dragon Quest VII or VIII, but is more substantial than the recent DS remakes of Dragon Quest IV and V. As you'd expect from the series, the localization is fantastic, full of clever puns and flavorful accents. The game is also a feast for the eyes, featuring smooth 3-D environments, colorful town and dungeon designs, well-animated 3-D monsters, and an equipment system that features over 1,000 items with unique appearances.

Even the highest-budget console games would struggle to compete with the production values in Dragon Quest IX. The one real disappointment is the mysterious lack of save slots; you get only one, so you can't replay the game's opening or loan your copy to a friend without wiping out all of your progress.

The idea of adding multiplayer features to a story-driven, turn-based RPG originally struck me as insane, but Dragon Quest IX has made me a believer. The multiplayer options aren't quite as flexible as I would like, but they can be a lot of fun and they do add a tremendous amount of value to the game. And if such options are of no interest to you, it's easy to ignore them entirely and enjoy Dragon Quest IX as a surprisingly solid single-player RPG. Who says you can't have it both ways? —**CASEY L.**

WRITERS' BLOCK

IN CELEBRATION OF THE SUMMER MOVIE SEASON, WHAT VIDEO GAME WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MADE INTO A FILM?

JUSTIN CHENG

As a fan of both pirates (the yo-ho-ho kind) and comedy, I think a Monkey Island movie would be pretty awesome.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

Hmm, I think I'll go with No More Heroes, preferably with Quentin Tarantino attached to the project.

CASEY LOE

Tagline: They've come here to chew jellybeans and kick ass and...*they have plenty of jellybeans*. A Boy and His Blob: The Movie!

RANDY NELSON

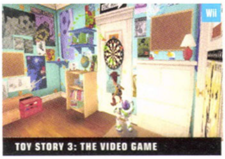
I love action movies, and I can't think of one that would be more over-the-top than No More Heroes—directed by Ryuhei Kitamura (*Versus*).

CHRIS SLATE

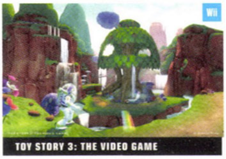
Forget the games, let's see a movie about Nintendo Power! The drama of the deadline; the thrill of getting in a new game; the fighting over where to go for lunch—I smell Oscar!

STEVE THOMASON

The storytelling in Michel Ancel's Beyond Good & Evil is among the best in video games, so it seems particularly well-suited to the silver screen.



TOY STORY 3: THE VIDEO GAME



TOY STORY 3: THE VIDEO GAME

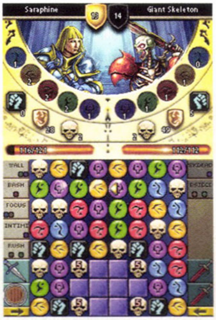
TOY STORY 3: THE VIDEO GAME

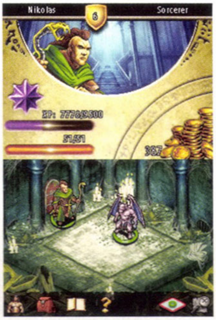
RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **DISNEY INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **AVALANCHE SOFTWARE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Don't write off Toy Story 3: The Video Game as just another licensed title. Sure, there's a Story mode that includes levels inspired by scenes from the movie. But this game also has a Toy Box mode in which you run around a customizable open world and tackle missions. (Think a kid-friendly Grand Theft Auto.) This Toy Box mode really is the reason to check this game out—it's good fun to explore the world, collect widgets, and interact with random townspeople. (I could do with fewer fetch quests, however.)

Even without the Toy Box mode, though, this game would be notable for how its Story mode is constructed. It has loads of variety: there's platforming, shooting, grinding on rails, and even some stealth-heavy segments. And one of Story mode's most interesting features is its three-character gameplay—you swap between Woody, Buzz, and Jessie, each of whom has unique abilities. (Woody can use his drawstring as a grappling hook, for example, whereas Buzz can throw things farther than the others.) It's not perfect—there are some context-sensitivity issues that can make the platforming more frustrating than it should be, for instance—but Toy Story 3: The Video Game is surprisingly fun. —**JUSTIN C.**





Puzzlingly Familiar

PUZZLE QUEST 2

RATING: 7.5

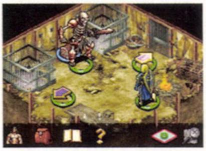
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **D3PUBLISHER**
DEVELOPER: **INFINITE INTERACTIVE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

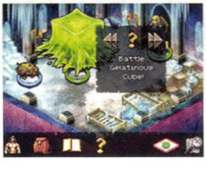
The original Puzzle Quest transformed Bejeweled-style puzzles into fierce battles with RPG sensibilities, and not much has changed in this sequel. Swapping colored gems to match lines of three or more earns you mana points that you can use to cast both offensive and defensive spells in one-on-one matchups. The biggest addition to battles is the ability to equip a weapon (which corresponds to a new type of gem), but it functions similarly to the rest of your spells and doesn't add much gameplaywise. This lack of innovation might be good news if you loved the first game, though, because battles are just as tense and well-balanced as ever.

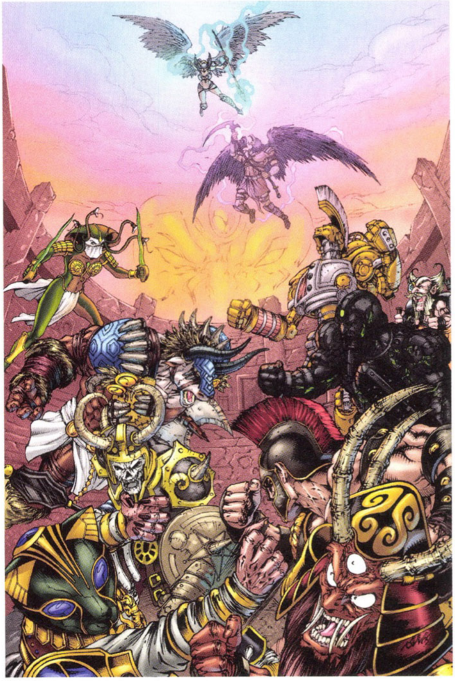
Combat still takes center stage, but peppered throughout the quest are also six different minigames that play off the basic gem-swapping mechanic. In each minigame, you're given a set number of turns to accomplish some kind of goal, like matching a certain number of gems or making matches on specific locations on the grid. For example, one minigame tasks you with matching gems on as many grid spaces as possible to "search" the room for treasure, while another has you position specific gems on designated grid squares to unlock a new spell. Each activity offers welcome variety, complementing the battles without taking too much time away from them.

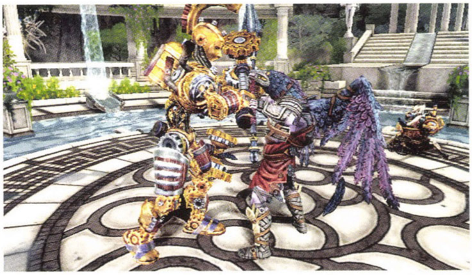
Our biggest gripe with PQ2 is its overall lackluster presentation—generic art, a mundane story, and slightly sluggish animations bring down the experience. If you can see past its ho-hum looks and you don't mind that this isn't significantly different from the original, the formula still works for puzzle and RPG aficionados alike.

—**CAROLYN G.**









History of Hurt

TOURNAMENT OF LEGENDS

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE**
ESRB: **TEEN**

In the beginning, there was Gladiator A.D., High Voltage Software's gory take on the gladiatorial combat of ancient Rome. Perhaps to avoid a likely M rating, the violence was toned down, the color palette made less dreary, and the gladiators replaced by gods and legends. Thus Tournament of Legends was born. Although we wish we could have seen how the *300*-inspired Gladiator A.D. turned out, this fighter—a rarity on Wii as it is—still offers a fairly unique, more strategic take on the genre than we're used to.

In screenshots, Tournament of Legends looks generally like any other 3-D fighting game, but in action it's more akin to the likes of Punch-Out!! due to its windows of opportunity and the strengths and weaknesses of its 10 combatants. Those combatants are a unique bunch, too: a Roman gladiator, a faux Jupiter, a Valkyrie, a gear-driven automaton, a Medusa, an Egyptian goddess, a minotaur, a demon, a skeleton, and a god of death.

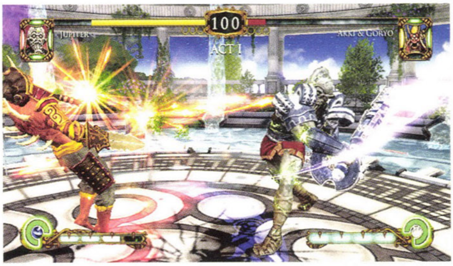
In addition to basic attacks—which are performed by swinging the Wii Remote or Nunchuk horizontally or vertically or by using the Classic Controller—each character has unique powers, such as Kara the Valkyrie's bolt of Thor's lightning or the gladiator Marcus's rain of arrows. They're all very different (some involve the motion controls; some don't) and make the characters all feel distinct. The characters also wield different types of weapons, giving their attacks varying ranges—and, in a nice twist, they can use the weapons of defeated foes in their same "weight class."

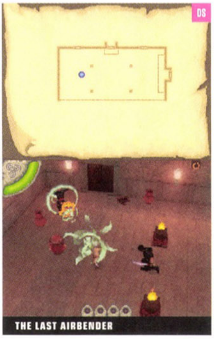
You can also earn orbs from fallen opponents, which offer enchantments that let you inflict extra damage, drain health, slow your foes, and more, but you can use only one in any given match. Plus, there are unblockable "tide-turning" attacks, and the arenas themselves pose threats such as a Kraken that you must dodge using motion controls.

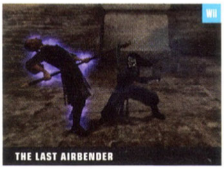
Getting back to the game's Punch-Out!! influences, the fights are broken into timed rounds, between which you can take part in a motion-based minigame to regain health and repair your armor. When you're knocked down, you can shake the Wii Remote and Nunchuk to regain health, or perform gestures to prevent a downed foe from doing the same.

As far as looks go, the game is a mixed bag. The character designs aren't bad—they're just a tad generic (although the automaton is a standout). Additionally, the action isn't all that smooth; at least once a match, we noticed characters moving choppily. Finally, the overall pacing could be faster.

Tournament of Legends won't immediately appeal to the Soulcalibur crowd—the controls won't come naturally, but once you learn the ropes (or lack thereof, given that matches don't take place in a ring) you'll find a challenging, well-balanced game that can be a whole lot of fun with friends. Just make sure you're in the same room—it's sadly lacking Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection play. **—RANDY N.**







Wii
THE LAST AIRBENDER

THE LAST AIRBENDER

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **HALFBRICK**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Surprisingly ambitious for a handheld movie tie-in, the DS version of The Last Airbender is an enjoyable adventure game in which everything just "clicks." That might not seem like high praise, but when you've got a game that combines combat, puzzles, platforming, and RPG elements, features two distinct characters, and relies almost entirely on the touch screen for the controls, it's an achievement worth noting. The interface is probably the most impressive part; both combat and character movement are handled via the touch screen (although you do have to hold L or R when using elemental powers), and the action is incredibly responsive and smooth. Whether you're clobbering bad guys with a combo, running up a wall to perform some of Prince Zuko's acrobatics, or pushing a block into place with Aang's wind powers, touch-screen controls have rarely felt this intuitive.

Though the game follows the same story and premise as its Wii counterpart, this version is broader in scope; exploration segments in which you converse with nonplayable characters flesh out the plot and add depth to both the heroes and the gameplay. This version also features environments and scenes not present in the Wii title—a particularly appreciated inclusion is a boss battle near the end of the game that is merely a cut-scene on Wii. The only things preventing me from giving this game a higher score are its brevity and lack of challenge; you barely learn your last ability before the credits roll. Nonetheless, this is a solid effort, and fans of the license, especially, should check it out. —**CHRIS H.**

THE LAST AIRBENDER

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **THQ STUDIO AUSTRALIA**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Outside of an epic soundtrack and a few cool graphic effects (such as displacing snow when you run through it and knocking off enemies' armor when you attack them), The Last Airbender is a pretty unspectacular action-adventure game. Sure, you can manipulate wind and fire (depending on whether you're playing as heroic Aang or antagonist Zuko), but the gameplay mostly amounts to whaling on the A Button to bash bad guys with canned combos; you don't even have any defensive moves. Puzzles and nifty platforming bits add some variety, but wonky animation (the enemies just look like they're standing still as you knock them into the air) and lackluster storytelling (the cut-scenes are distinctly low-rent) hold the game back. —**CHRIS H.**

The Boy Who Built

LEGO HARRY POTTER: YEARS 1–4

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **TRAVELLER'S TALES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

In the past I've said that I've grown a tad weary of the LEGO formula. After playing LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4, however, I think the LEGO games have a little bit of life in them yet. A lot of it has to do with the source material—I like Batman and Indiana Jones quite a lot, but neither of them makes for excellent LEGO-style adventures. Harry Potter, on the other hand, proves to be a great match.

It's fun to just run around Hogwarts, experimenting with your arsenal of spells to uncover collectibles and gain access to new areas. You can use Lumos to make dangerous plants retreat, for example, or employ Wingardium Leviosa to lift and build brick objects. Sometimes objects are built automatically, and sometimes you have to maneuver them manually—that's when it's great to be able to use the Wii Remote controller to move things about. Actually, it's handy to use the remote to point at objects you want to affect in general because it gives you more-precise control when interacting with the environment.

As fun as the puzzle-solving and exploration can be, however, there are context-sensitivity issues that can cause some irritation—sometimes you grab something you didn't mean to grab, for instance, or you don't grab something you wanted to. Then there's the fact that no matter how enjoyable I found LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4 to be, I couldn't shake the overall feeling of repetitiveness as I played—partially because you explore many of the same areas in each of your four years at Hogwarts, and partially because LEGO games themselves haven't changed all that much in general. —**JUSTIN C.**

REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa	6.5	Electronic Arts	254	E
Academy of Champions: Soccer	6.5	Ubisoft	248	E
All Star Karate	7.0	THQ	255	E10+
Arc Rise Fantasia	7.5	Ignition	256	T
Astro Boy: The Video Game	7.5	D3Publisher	248	E10+
Attack of the Movies 3D	4.0	Majesco	255	T
Avatar: The Game	5.0	Ubisoft	250	T
The Beatles: Rock Band	9.0	MTV Games	247	T
The Bigs 2	6.0	2K Sports	244	E10+
Boom Blox Bash Party	8.0	Electronic Arts	243	E
A Boy and His Blob	8.5	Majesco	247	E
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare: Reflex	9.0	Activision	249	M
Calling	5.0	Hudson	253	T
The Conduit	8.0	Sega	243	T
Cursed Mountain	7.0	Deep Silver	246	M
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party 3	6.5	Konami	248	E10+
Data East Arcade Classics	6.5	Majesco	252	T
Dead Space Extraction	8.0	Electronic Arts	247	M
Destiny of Zorro	2.5	505	243	E10+
DiRT 2	4.5	Codemasters	247	E10+
DJ Hero	8.5	Activision	249	T
Dragon Ball: Revenge of King Piccolo	6.5	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	7.0	THQ	248	E
Endless Ocean: Blue World	7.5	Nintendo	252	E10+
Family Fun Football	4.5	Tecmo	247	E
FIFA Soccer 10	6.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers	8.0	Square Enix	250	T
Fragile Dreams: Farewell Ruins of the Moon	5.5	XSEED	253	T
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	7.5	Atari	243	E10+
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	5.0	Electronic Arts	246	T
Grand Slam Tennis	7.5	Electronic Arts	243	E
Green Day: Rock Band	8.0	MTV	256	T
Guitar Hero 5	8.0	Activision	247	T
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince	5.5	Electronic Arts	244	E10+
Harvest Moon: Animal Parade	7.5	Natsume	248	E
Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings	7.5	LucasArts	243	T
Iron Man 2	4.0	Sega	256	T
Jambo! Safari	3.5	Sega	250	E
Ju-On: The Grudge	6.0	XSEED	247	M
Karaoke Revolution	6.0	Konami	248	T
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	6.5	LucasArts	249	E10+
LEGO Rock Band	8.0	Warner Bros.	249	E10+
Let's Tap	7.0	Sega	243	E
Little King's Story	9.0	XSEED	244	T
Madden NFL 10	8.0	Electronic Arts	245	E
Major League Baseball 2K10	7.0	2K Sports	253	E
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	7.0	Sega	247	E
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	5.5	Activision	248	T
Mini Ninjas	7.5	Eidos	247	E10+
Monster Hunter Tri	9.0	Capcom	254	T
The Munchables	7.0	Namco Bandai	243	E
Muramasa: The Demon Blade	8.0	Ignition	246	T
MySims Agents	7.0	Electronic Arts	247	E
Naruto Shippuden: Clash of Ninja Revolution 3	7.5	Tomy	249	T
NBA 2K10	6.0	2K Sports	247	E
Need for Speed Nitro	7.0	Electronic Arts	249	E10+
New Super Mario Bros. Wii	9.0	Nintendo	249	E
NHL 2K10	8.0	2K Sports	246	E10+
No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle	9.0	Ubisoft	252	M
Overlord: Dark Legend	7.0	Codemasters	244	T
Phantom Brave: We Meet Again	8.0	NIS America	243	T
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Gottlieb Collection	6.5	Crave	251	E
Pirates Plundarrr	4.0	Majesco	255	E10+
Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	8.0	Ubisoft	255	T
Pro Evolution Soccer 2010	8.0	Konami	250	E
Rabbids Go Home	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E10+
Racquet Sports	6.5	Ubisoft	253	E
Red Steel 2	8.0	Ubisoft	254	T
Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles	8.0	Capcom	249	M
Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love	7.5	NIS America	253	T
Sam & Max: Beyond Time and Space	8.0	Atari	255	T
Shaun White Snowboarding: World Stage	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E
Shiren the Wanderer	6.5	Atlus	252	T
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	8.0	Konami	249	M
SimAnimals Africa	5.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
The Sky Crawlers: Innocent Aces	7.0	XSEED	250	T
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	8.0	Sega	252	E
Spectrobes: Origins	5.5	Disney	246	E10+
Spore Hero	7.0	Electronic Arts	247	E10+
Spyborgs	7.5	Capcom	247	T
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes	5.0	LucasArts	249	T
Super Mario Galaxy 2	9.5	Nintendo	256	E
Super Monkey Ball Step & Roll	5.5	Sega	252	E
Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars	9.0	Capcom	251	T
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Smash-Up	7.5	Ubisoft	247	E10+
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	9.0	Electronic Arts	243	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	9.0	Electronic Arts	256	E
Tornado Outbreak	6.5	Konami	247	E10+
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	5.5	Activision	245	T
Trauma Team	8.0	Atlus	255	T
Valhalla Knights: Eldar Saga	4.0	XSEED	246	T
Virtua Tennis 2009	7.0	Sega	244	E
Wii Sports Resort	8.5	Nintendo	245	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	7.5	THQ	248	T
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	5.0	Activision	243	T

MORE ON:

SUPER MARIO GALAXY 2

Even though I previewed Super Mario Galaxy 2 multiple times over the last few months, I still found something brilliant and jaw-dropping at every turn once I got my hands on the finished game. It is pure, unfiltered fun from beginning to end—and even after you think the adventure is over, there's a whole lot more. If you aren't loving this game, you should have your Nintendo Fun Club membership revoked. —CHRIS H.

MORE ON:

GTI CLUB SUPERMINI FESTA!

When we talk about retro-style titles, we usually mean games that have 8- or 16-bit aesthetics. Small-car-centric arcade racer GTI Club Supermini Festa! feels like a game from the late '90s/early '00s, making it not quite old-school enough to be charming. —JUSTIN C.

40
3
TIME EXTEND

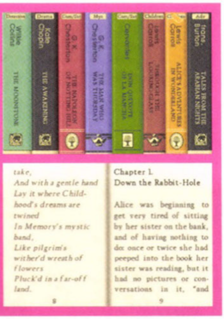
Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth	8.0	Capcom	252	T
Again	7.0	Tecmo Koei	253	T
Ant Nation	2.0	Konami	245	E
Assassin's Creed II: Discovery	7.0	Ubisoft	250	T
Atelier Annie: Alchemists of Sera Island	8.0	NIS America	248	E10+
Avatar: The Game	5.0	Ubisoft	250	E10+
Beat City	8.5	THQ	254	E
Bejeweled Twist	8.5	PopCap	251	E
Bleach: The 3rd Phantom	4.0	Sega	246	T
Blue Dragon: Awakened Shadow	7.5	D3Publisher	256	E10+
Bookworm DS	8.5	PopCap	249	E
Cooking Mama 3: Shop & Chop	6.0	Majesco	248	E
C.O.P. The Recruit	4.0	Ubisoft	249	T
Crime Scene	5.0	SouthPeak	253	M
Dawn of Discovery	8.5	Ubisoft	244	E
Dawn of Heroes	7.5	Majesco	253	E10+
Deca Sports DS	5.5	Hudson	253	E
Dementium II	8.0	SouthPeak	255	M
Dragon Ball: Origins 2	8.0	Namco Bandai	256	T
Dragon Ball Z: Attack of the Saiyans	8.0	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	8.0	THQ	248	E
Fighting Fantasy: The Warlock of Firetop Mountain	4.0	Aspyr	248	T
Fossil Fighters	8.0	Nintendo	246	E
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	5.0	Electronic Arts	245	E10+
Glory of Heracles	7.0	Nintendo	251	E10+
Guitar Hero On Tour: Modern Hits	7.0	Activision	244	E10+
Harvest Moon: Frantic Farming	8.0	Natsume	243	E
Harvest Moon: Sunshine Islands	7.0	Natsume	248	E
Hero's Saga: Laevatein Tactics	7.0	Aksys	247	T
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey	4.0	505	246	E10+
Infinite Space	8.0	Sega	253	T
Iron Man 2	6.5	Sega	256	E10+
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days	9.0	Square Enix	247	E10+
Knights in the Nightmare	8.0	Atlus	243	T
The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks	9.5	Nintendo	250	E10+
The Legendary Starfy	7.0	Nintendo	243	E
LEGO Battles	5.0	Warner Bros.	243	E
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	5.0	LucasArts	249	E10+
Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story	9.5	Nintendo	246	E
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	8.0	Sega	247	E
Mega Man Star Force 3: Red Joker/ Black Ace	6.0	Capcom	244	E
Mega Man Zero Collection	9.0	Capcom	256	E
Miami Law	3.0	Hudson	243	T
Might & Magic: Clash of Heroes	8.5	Ubisoft	247	E10+
Mini Ninjas	6.0	Eidos	247	E10+
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Council 4	5.0	Tomy	243	E10+
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Destiny 2	7.0	Tomy	247	T
Nostalgia	7.0	Ignition	248	E10+
Overlord Minions	7.0	Codemasters	244	E10+
Phantasy Star 0	8.0	Sega	248	E10+
Picross 3D	7.5	Nintendo	255	E
Pokémon HeartGold Version	9.5	Nintendo	253	E
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Sky	8.0	Nintendo	248	E
Pokémon SoulSilver Version	9.5	Nintendo	253	E
Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box	8.0	Nintendo	246	E10+
Rabbids Go Home	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E
Ragnarok DS	5.0	XSEED	252	E10+
River City Soccer Hooligans	7.0	Aksys	256	T
Roogoo Attack	4.0	SouthPeak	243	E
Rooms: The Main Building	7.0	Hudson	253	E
Sands of Destruction	7.0	Sega	250	T
Scribblenauts	9.0	Warner Bros.	247	E10+
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor	8.0	Atlus	244	T
Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey	8.0	Atlus	253	M
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	6.0	Sega	252	E
Sonic Classic Collection	7.0	Sega	253	E
Space Bust-A-Move	7.0	Taito	245	E
Space Invaders Extreme 2	8.0	Square Enix	248	E
Spore Hero Arena	5.0	Electronic Arts	247	E
Squishy Tank	8.0	Natsume	253	E
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	5.5	LucasArts	249	E10+
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Arcade Attack	4.5	Ubisoft	248	E10+
Tetris Party Deluxe	8.5	Majesco	256	E
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	7.0	Activision	245	E10+
WarioWare D.I.Y.	8.5	Nintendo	253	E
WireWay	6.5	Konami	249	E
A Witch's Tale	4.0	NIS America	247	E10+
The Wizard of Oz: Beyond the Yellow Brick Road	6.5	XSEED	246	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	7.0	THQ	248	T

MORE ON:

100 CLASSIC BOOKS

Just in time for long car trips and lazy days at the beach comes this collection of timeless tales such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Pride and Prejudice*, and *Dracula*. We weren't sure how to review something like this, but if you're up for a good story (or 100), it could be the perfect summer companion. —CHRIS S.



take,
And with a gentle hand
Lay it where Childhood's dreams are twined
In Memory's mystic band,
Like pilgrim's wither'd wreath of flowers
Pluck'd in a far-off land.
8

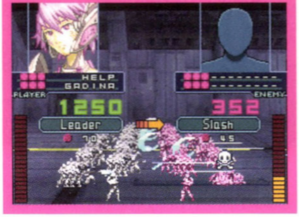
Chapter 1.
Down the Rabbit-Hole

Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, "and
9

MORE ON:

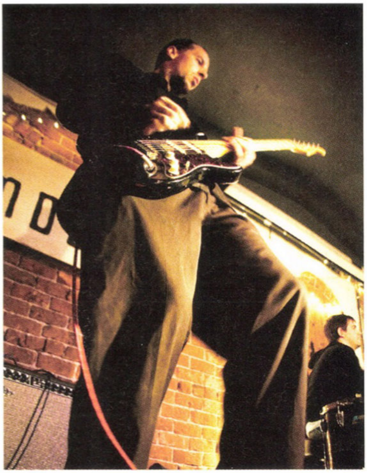
INFINITE SPACE

It didn't get much hype, but Infinite Space is one of my favorite DS titles of the year thus far. Co-developed by PlatinumGames and NudeMaker, it's a wonderful bit of fantasy fulfillment for geeks like me who have always wanted to design and lead their own space armada. —STEVE T.



COMMUNITY

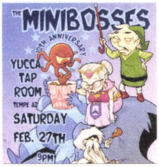
There are plenty of great covers of NES songs out there, but few are as rockin' as the ones by Minibosses.



FANDOM

Epic Bosses

Ten years on, NES cover band Minibosses is still going strong.



WITH A DECADE of rock-'n'-roll boss battles under their belts, Minibosses is still undefeated. One of the first video game cover bands to wield their instruments to tear through music from their favorite NES games, these guys continue to crank out high-energy, note-for-note renditions of tunes from popular old-school games such as Castlevania and Contra.

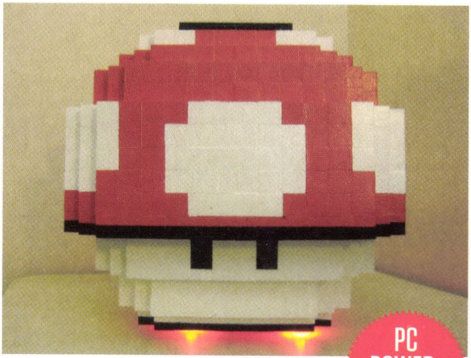
Earlier this year, the band celebrated its tenth anniversary with an energetic show at the Yucca Tap Room in Tempe, Arizona, where the eager audience was packed with fans and familiar faces. The late night of Nintendo-inspired revelry was full of rowdy cheer and off-the-hook sing-along action to set-list favorites including Goonies 2, Batman, and Mega Man 2. The best part of the evening, says Aaron Burke, one of the band's guitarists and a founding member, was hanging out with and playing in front of so many good friends who made the trek out to see the band: "It was great. I think everyone was really amped up, and we were too because it was such a special show," recalls Burke. "A lot of our friends were there, and a lot of people flew in for it. The place was packed to the brim. It was nice to see everybody out there and everybody having a good time."

For many, the anniversary show was the first opportunity to see Minibosses in action in quite some time. The band played only three shows in 2009. Though they're still going strong, Burke admits, "Our activity has definitely slowed," explaining that the individual members have a lot going on in their home lives. "We noticed that ourselves, though, and I think we're all kind of taking steps to reverse that a little bit, especially because the last few shows we've gotten to play have all been so much fun."

When Minibosses played their first show in February 2000, Burke never imagined they'd still be at it more than 10 years later. The band is approaching its 200th show. Though new game-music covers are added to the set list on a regular basis, the group is still playing many of the same classics it has all along. "It's fun to play that stuff for so long and not get sick of it," Burke tells us, adding that recent shows have been rejuvenating. "The most fun I've probably ever had playing Mega Man 2 was at the 10-year show, and that was just because of how insane the crowd was."

Far from fading away, Minibosses has more plans on the horizon. Burke hopes to be playing shows with greater frequency again and to return to playing bigger gigs like the annual Penny Arcade Expo soon. —**NATHAN M.**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN BUGG

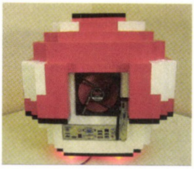


PC POWER-UP!

MOD JOB

Mushroom Masterpiece

Another impressive PC-case-mod project from a skilled reader



IN VOL. 240 we brought you the story of reader Richard Clinton's amazing Black Mage computer-case mod, which was painstakingly constructed using about 2,000 wooden cubes. At the time, Clinton intended to follow it up with an 8-bit-stylized version of the White Mage from Final Fantasy, but instead, driven by the need for a custom home-theater PC for his living room, he opted to go in another direction.

Enter the Super Mushroom case mod. Built using a similar process to the one for the Black Mage case—gluing together one-inch wooden cubes to create the shell for the inner computer parts—Clinton's tribute to the classic Super Mario Bros. power-up is an impressive piece of work, and entirely functional to boot. Because he didn't need the power of a full-sized desktop computer, Clinton opted to pursue a small case design. He tells us, "The Super Mushroom has a smaller profile, and I'm sure just about everyone can recognize it instantly," says Clinton. "[That] makes it a perfect choice for a living-room PC, as it will be one of the first things someone sees when coming into the room."

No kidding—check out the red glow emanating from the bottom of that beast! Clinton says he worked on the box for about a month, spending upward of $100 on the 1,400 wooden cubes and paint (the actual computer parts cost about $500). His investment has paid dividends: the case won him a mod competition at the PAX East convention in Boston this spring. The prize was $500 in parts for his next computer-mod project.

Instead of digging back into the Final Fantasy or Mario series, Clinton says he plans to find a new muse for his next endeavor. "As of now, I have not decided on which universe to represent next with a new mod," he admits, "but a lot of potential is out there still untapped." Whatever he chooses, we'll be keeping a close eye on the undertaking. **—ANDREW H.**

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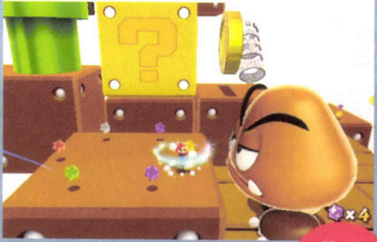
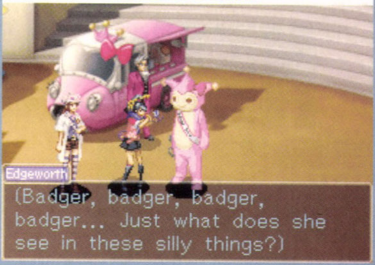
THIS MONTH'S SHOT



Unfortunately, Mario's audition for *Dancing with the Stars* was less than impressive.

Here's our caption. THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?

VOLUME 255'S SHOT



Edgeworth

(Badger, badger, badger, badger... Just what does she see in these silly things?)

"In the raging debate of the who-looks-better-in-pink contest, Edgeworth couldn't stand the fact that he was losing by two votes." **—FISHERSPOT**

"Pink and it has a bow? Does it shoot eggs, too?" **—DAVID T.**

"Objection! Edgeworth's statement clearly contradicts with the facts about badgers, Your Honor!" **—JUSTIN**

"The Raccoon Club president was horrified when his vice president had accidentally brought his badger car instead of his raccoon car, and had forgotten to pick up Tom Nook on the way there." **—POKE_FAN992**

"Edgeworth! This is no time for badgers! The Stay Puft Marshmallow Man's tiny, pink but equally aggressive sister is right in front of us!" **—ALEX M.**

ABOVE *and* BEYOND

Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, STE 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. We'll print the best stuff!

SEPTEMBER 2010 · VOL. 258

NEXT MONTH

FALL GAME GUIDE

What's next in the world of Nintendo? You'll get to find out in our September issue. We'll have in-depth coverage of all the new games that you'll be playing this fall and beyond!

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